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An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of K-12 Latina School Administrators
in One California Region

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Helen Rodriguez

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September 2017

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August 2017

An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of K-12 Public School Latina School Leaders
in One California Region

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by

Helen Rodriguez

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I am eternally grateful to the six female Latina Leaders who courageously and persistently endure the many challenges and barriers as they passionately and diligently dedicate their time, talents, and personal resources to ensure that children in the public school system receive an equitable and appropriate education. Their willingness to share their stories that contained much sacrifice to acquire higher education and to secure and maintain leadership positions will contribute to the few research studies on female Latina leadership and inform other female Latina leaders and future female Latina leaders that they are not alone and to not allow such challenges and barriers to keep them from advocating and serving children, especially those who mirror them, in the public educational system.

I am privileged and honored to have a dissertation committee who provided support, assistance, encouragement, and guidance throughout the research. I could not have completed this dissertation without Dr. Sharon Conley's extraordinary continued support. In addition, the educational experiences of my committee members combined resulted in a dissertation that gives a voice to female Latina Leaders in public school systems. Dr. Sharon Conley's Educational Psychology and Organizational Behavior background provided a lens in the behavior and work design in an educational organization. Dr. Jenny Cook-Gumperz's Sociology background provided a lens in the role of linguistic ideology in culture practices and socialization. Dr. Rebeca Mireles-Rios' Education with an emphasis of Child and Adolescent Development background and her practical experience as a teacher in the public school system provided a lens in the

inequalities in educational systems and how this creates challenges and barriers for Latino/a students. I truly appreciate my committee for their input, advice, inspiration, and motivation.

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ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Study of the Perspectives of K-12 Public School Latina School Leaders

in One California Region

by

Helen Rodriguez

This dissertation utilized a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of Latina K-12 educational leaders in a southern geographic region within California. Current trends among K-12 public schools in California reflect a disproportionate ratio of Latino(a) students to Latino(a) school administrators. This disparity creates a need for increased insight and understanding of cultural mores and customs typically associated with the ethnic make-up of the school population, which promotes the potential for successful administrative leadership. However, potential school administrators who are Latina are at particular risk to achieve a position of leadership within the public school setting for a variety of reasons. This research utilized interview data from 6 Latina leaders who were currently working as educational administrators, and had professional experience in schools from before their time as educational leaders. The participants were given pseudonyms that fit with the main themes in their interviews. The case descriptions presented the following from each participant: background, experiences with mentoring, leadership roles, views on female/male leadership, goals and challenges, views on Latina leaders, and networks. Potential trends in the perceptions of barriers that presented challenges to Latina school administrators from reaching positions of school leadership are discussed. Implications identify considerations for practice that will build

capacity of Latina public school leadership that is reflective of the ethnic community they serve.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Latinas who pursue professional careers as educational leaders encounter many barriers in their efforts to successfully navigate the public school system in California in their efforts to become educational leaders within the school community in where they work. For example, at the 2015 California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) Conference, a workshop entitled: “Hermanas Leading Workshop” was presented. Here, a Latina K-12 public school district superintendent shared her personal experience with subtle and overt prejudice as in her efforts to procuring a position as a K-12 public school district superintendent. The presenter reported that when she attended a California School Administrators Conference, she noticed a position for superintendent was being solicited with a district she was very familiar with. As she approached the table and took a flier for the position, it was quickly taken away from her and she was informed that the superintendent position had been filled. The recruiter proceeded to inform her that she should pursue a position as a superintendent for Kindergarten – Grade 8 elementary school. She ignored the recruiter’s suggestion and was agitated by his comments. She was left with a sense of inadequacy by someone who had no knowledge of her professional experience. She continued to actively pursue this particular position. As a result of her relentless persistence and tenacity, she was successfully selected for the position which she had been previously dissuaded from pursuing.

From a similar perspective, a Latina elementary principal shared a perceived challenge she experienced in her pursuit of procuring an administrative position. In this

instance, a male Latino superintendent encouraged her to apply for a school principal position at the secondary level within his school district -- she was employed as an elementary school principal in another school district at the time. Though the position was closed, the Latino superintendent would arrange to have it re-opened for her to apply. As a result, she made application for consideration for the secondary level high school position. Waiting to learn more about the status of her application, she received telephone contact from the respective Human Resources department inviting her to interview for an elementary principal position. Noting she had applied for the secondary level principal position, she declined the offer to interview for the site principal position at the elementary level.

Shortly thereafter, the Latino male superintendent contacted her and asked her why she hadn't applied for the secondary administrator position. She shared her experience with the Human Resources department for the district. Soon she received another invitation to interview for the secondary level school principal. Unfortunately, the interview date conflicted with funeral arrangements for the passing of her father. When she explained her circumstances and requested an alternative date, the district was inflexible in their willingness to arrange an alternate time and denied her request. Once again, the Latino male superintendent contacted her and inquired as to why she declined the invitation to interview for the secondary level school principal position. When she explained her circumstances over what had transpired, he expressed his condolences and asked her to consider any future vacancies within the district. She was left with the feeling that the district could have made accommodations if they wished to do so.

A third example reflects the variety of barriers that exist for a female Latina encounter. Specifically, a female Latina elementary school principal experienced insubordinate behavior by the custodian assigned to her school. Though his work ethic and quality of work was observed to be impeccable, he consistently ignored requests from her to speak and take directions. Having documented these repeated encounters, a meeting was convened with the custodian and his bargaining units' representative to discuss the observed disrespectful behavior. In that discussion, the custodian was surprised of the detailed accounts of documented incidents reflecting observed insubordinate behavior and as a result, the male Latino custodian was administratively transferred to another school. This left the Latina elementary school principal with the perception that the Latino custodian could not accept the supervisorial relationship with a female Latina.

These experiences shared by three Latina school administrators exemplify the various types of overt and passive-aggressive discriminatory behavior women, and particularly Latina school administrators, encounter as potential barriers that can adversely affect their efforts in functioning as effective school leaders. It is important to understand that the indoctrination of prejudice and discriminatory behavior within the culture of public education among Latino and ethnic minority school leaders does not occur in isolation. Perceptions of school faculty and school administrators set the stage for how minority students are perceived and are expected to behave that can present a prolonged sense of oppression that can adversely affect their personal and professional growth.

Consider the following introduction to a position paper that was written by a large group of students at a high school in Southern California to their respective school administration:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my Latino peers. Recently a promo video was made of...high school and it was brought to our attention that most of the video only consisted of Caucasian students, teachers, and parents. Maybe it was not intentionally but we feel disrespected and discriminated [against]. To you it may not seem like a big problem but to us it will always be. We are proud of our Raza, some of us make poor decisions and rebel against the rules but like a staff member once said, 'we all have our bad days'.

Considering our public schools, this representation of how minority students experience a backlash from prejudicial views from the culture at large can pose long term adverse effects on our minority student population and for Latinas in particular. The position paper that was written by a large group of Latino students at a high school conveyed their feelings of oppression and discrimination within the school culture and established awareness among educators to develop an insightful understanding of how to productively promote the social, emotional and educational well-being of minority students. If left unchecked, such experiences may become the norm within the culture that promulgates this sense of oppression, further creating a barrier in efforts to build a productive and independent educated citizenry.

The purpose of this dissertation study was to determine whether perceived barriers by Latina public school leaders existed that prevented them from achieving positions of leadership among the ranks of public school districts. The experiences of the

female Latina educational leaders mentioned earlier provided examples of the many challenges and barriers that women and specifically female Latina educational leaders might encounter. In this dissertation, I was interested in the barriers and challenges encountered, as well as facilitators and mentors to those in leadership roles. Also, I wanted to focus on Latina women administrators in particular, and through identifying their perspectives, add to the knowledge base on Latina women leaders. The benefit of this research was to identify trends within the current state of affairs reported and to extend the body of knowledge that could ultimately improve opportunity for potential prospective Latina school administrators to obtain positions of leadership within the diverse communities in which they serve.

These perspectives and reflections are borne out by a variety of demographic and descriptive data that indicated a significant disparity among public school positions of administrative leadership who were of Latino/as descent, as compared to their White, non-Latino counterparts who occupied positions of administrative leadership. In California, for example, there were a total of 1,022 public school districts at the time of this study. The total number of public school administrators was 25,819. Of this number, 5,698 (22.1%) were reported to be of Latino/a descent. Of those of Latino/a descent, 2,369 (9.18%) were males and 3,329 (12.9%) were females¹. These figures were misleading in that, although a greater number of females appeared in the count, they occupied a large range of lower level administrative positions, from assistant principal to director.

Moving to the superintendent level, according to a California Department of Education's (CDE) data report (2014/2015), there were 922 superintendents in the State

¹ These statistics were obtained from: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>

of California. The Association of California Schools Administrators (ACSA) reported that there were 832 superintendents in California who were active members of their organization. Of this figure, 506 (60.8%) were male superintendents and 318 (38.2%) were female superintendents.

Of the 506 (60.8%) ACSA members who were male superintendents, 71 (14%) were Hispanic superintendents. Of the 318 (38.2%) ACSA members who were female superintendents, 31 (9.7%) were Hispanic superintendents. Another way to interpret this data is that there were 8.5% Hispanic male superintendents and 3.7% Hispanic female superintendents who were ACSA members out of the total number (N = 832) of superintendents who had ACSA membership.

Demographics for the big picture in California for this population further demonstrated the significant shortage of Latina school district superintendents. Here, the California Department of Education reported the total number of California superintendents for 2014/2015 was 922, and these superintendents served the 2014/2015 student demographics in California. These student demographics were the following: 53.25% Latinos, 6.16% African American not Hispanic, 25.00% White not Hispanic, 0.62% American Indian or Alaska Native, 8.70% Asian, 2.43% Filipino, 0.53% Pacific Islander, 2.68% Multi-racial Non-Hispanic and 0.63% None Reported. This means that a majority Latino/a population of students was being served by a majority white, male administrative population. These discrepancies among the demographic characteristics of students and school administrators demonstrated a need for the type of leaders who can relate to diverse students from a range of ethnic backgrounds and present as viable role models for our minority student population.

Study Purpose

Of the 6,235,520 students in California public schools during the 2014/2015 school year, 3,344,431 (53.6%) were Hispanic or Latino/a (male/female) students. With an increasing number of Latino/a students in California schools, the need for Latino/a leadership is crucial. According to Magdaleno (2006), school leaders are "most often perceived by Latino/a (male/female) students as positive role models who represent their future" (p. 12). Furthermore, Magdaleno, notes that because of "their inherent diversity and humanistic values," Latina/o leaders "are strategically poised to help create a culturally accessible and compassionate society that values people and community before material wealth and individual advancement" (p. 13).

However, there exists a relative lack of information describing the perspectives, leadership, and career experiences of Latina/o school leaders. Thus, this study's purpose was multi-dimensional, seeking to:

- 1) Address the relative lack of research pertaining to the perspectives of California Latina school leaders;
- 2) Describe and analyze the experiences that prepared them to become a leader and the challenges that they encountered, including roles stress;
- 3) Investigate how they acquired mentors, who they chose to be their role models, and how they perceive their gender influencing their opportunities to become leaders; and
- 4) Investigate their professional peer network and interactions.

Specifically, Mendez-Morse (2000; 2004) developed a framework to examine Latina educational leaders' perspectives on how they sought mentors from various sources that

met their specific needs and priorities. Eckman (2004) analyzed the role leadership plays in the role stress confronting leaders. Finally, Ortiz (2001) explored how these leaders built trust and dealt with conflict in their collegial interactions.

Significance of Study

This proposed study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the literature on Latina public school leaders (Mendez-Morse, 2004; Ortiz, 2001). Mendez-Morse's study was conducted in Texas, which is questionable as to its generalizability to the population at large. Similarly, Eckman's (2004) "role stress" framework was limited as it did not include the experiences of Latina educational leaders. As reflected in the related literature of this proposal, the participation of minority women in educational leadership positions remains an area necessitating further research and investigation (American Association of School Administrators, 1982; Montenegro, 1993; Ortiz, 2001). As Mendez-Morse noted, by studying the unique characteristics of various minority female educational leadership, research can contribute to expanding the understanding of leadership in general and recognition of the importance of particular qualities of minority women administrators.

In addition, the study draws on Mendez-Morse's (2000; 2004) framework to examine Latina educational leaders perspectives on how they sought mentors from various sources that met their specific needs and priorities, Eckman (2002) will also be drawn on to analyze the role leadership plays in the role stress confronting leaders, and Ortiz (2001) and Lencioni (2002; 2005) to explore how these leaders use networks, both internal and external, and build trust and deal with conflict in their collegial interactions.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the following:

1. Of the 6 Latina California public school leaders interviewed, not all were practicing as site administrative leaders at the time of the study (with literature indicating that a primary concern is the high school principalship). Participants in the study range from site principal to central office support staff (e.g. coordinators, director, etc.) to a previous board member.
2. The study only achieved access to leaders within 2-3 suburban cities in California.
3. The study relied on the reported views and experiences of leaders that were assumed to be truthful in nature which would allow for recurrent themes and specific attributes.
4. Due to the small number of Latina public school leaders in California, future studies must expand research efforts to include a variety of geographic regions throughout the United States to obtain greater validity, consistency and generalizability to the target population at large.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation was divided into six parts. Chapter one provides the introduction, purpose, importance and organization of the study. Chapter two provides perspectives of women in California public school administration and the growing complexity of the school administrative role to enable the reader to understand the contexts under which administrators operate. Chapter two also describes the theoretical frameworks used to disseminate the subsequent research and define key terms (e.g., role conflict). Chapter three presents a discussion addressing the research questions pertaining to the study methodology, including a description of data sources and data collection

procedures. Chapter four presents the narratives of the participants, organized thematically for each individual participant. Chapter five compares the participant's perspectives, noting similarities and differences between their experiences, leadership styles, and mentoring processes. Chapter six summarizes the study, discusses study findings, and presents implications for research and practice.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The literature for this study has been organized in three sections:

- 1) perspectives on leadership and women in administration, including complexities of the role;
- 2) experiences of Latina leaders in educational administration posts; and
- 3) the influence of administrative work in teams and team dysfunctions on leaders' experience of their leadership roles.

These three theoretical areas will help guide the analysis of the data for this study.

Perspectives on Leadership and Challenges of Women in Administration

When people think of education, they tend to think of students and teachers, and perhaps principals. These days, however, educational organizations have become increasingly complicated; administrative levels have expanded and administrative roles have correspondingly become subject to more pressure. According to Eckman (2004) and Pounder and Merrill (2001), these pressures have helped create a shortage of administrators. Focusing on the growing complexity of the high school principal's role, Pounder and Merrill stated:

The high school principalship is one of the most complex and challenging assignments in the public education system ... [Murphy (1994)] believed that 'while expectations are being added, little is being deleted from the principal's role' (p. 94-99). Principals are expected to provide a school vision . . . and

instructional leadership to improve core teaching and learning processes and outcomes in the school. (2001, pp. 35).

Drawing on similar observations about the growing complexity of the role, Eckman (2004) studied aspects of "role stress" that confronted women administrators in particular. She traced a principal shortage to the demands of the role:

Reasons given for a shortage of [principal] candidates included the unreasonable time demands and pressures on the principal, especially at the high school level, and the perception among potential candidates that one must be a "superman" to meet all of the expectations of the position. (p. 367)

Eckman (2004) also noted a 1994 report indicating that 53.1% of secondary school teachers were female, whereas only 13.8% of the secondary school principals were female. Her study, therefore, focused on principals and utilized survey techniques to explore similarities and differences in the relationships between gender, role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction among a sample of both female and male high school principals. She noted that the traditional career path to the superintendency was the high school principalship. In addition, since there was an increased interest in including women's experiences in educational administration theory, research had included studies of a few successful women who had served as superintendents. Nevertheless, there was a need to study the effect of gender on the high school principalship.

Eckman (2004) sought an explanation for the disproportionate and low representation of females serving as a high school principal. She formulated the research question, "Was there something about how women experienced role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction that explained why they were underrepresented in the

high school principalship?" (p. 2). She compared female and male high school principals' personal and professional attributes as well as their experiences of role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, experiences of role conflict were gathered by a Likert-type scale in which respondents ranked such things as "time for privacy, social commitments, ...concerns over household management, finances and child raising; and personal issues over expectations for self, others, and feelings of guilt" (p. 371.) Role conflict was ascertained by asking respondents to rank priorities in terms of "(a) significant relationships, first, (b) work equals relationship, and (3) work first" (p. 371). Job satisfaction was measured by asking respondents about "community relations, work conditions, financial rewards, relationships with supervisors, coworkers, and pupils, school characteristics and career opportunities" (p. 372).

Eckman's (2004) study surveyed high school principals in three Midwestern states from 1999 to 2000. There were 237 female and 327 male high school principals in the 1,560 public high school districts in the three states that were sent survey packets. Of the survey packets mailed, 164 (69.2%) female and 175 (53.5%) male high school principals returned their surveys. Among the findings were both similarities and differences between the female and male high school principals. Some of the significant differences were the years of teaching experience, marital status, presence of children in the home, and age of first principalship. Male high school principals had less teaching experience with more years serving as a principal, whereas, female high school principals tended to be older when they acquire their first principalship with more years of teaching experience. Two explanations were provided for this difference. One was that teaching is a female-dominated profession that quickly promotes males. This is called a "glass

escalator” (Williams, 2000). A second was that role expectations for females and males in the high school created the perception that women teach and men lead (Marshall, 1997, as cited in Eckman, 2004).

Male high school principals’ monetary concerns were significantly higher than females. This implied that early in their careers, males seek higher paying positions such as the principalship instead of continuing as teachers. Female high school principals experience higher levels of role conflict over household management. As a result of females simultaneously balancing teaching, family, and home, they delay their aspirations to serve in the principalship. Eckman's (2004) data indicated that 24% of the female high school principals and 59% of the male high school principals had children living at home. This finding suggested that females with children in the home may not apply for the principalship until their children are older and out of the house. Young female educators may delay their aspirations of becoming an administrator to fulfill their role as a wife and mother according to societal expectations. In addition, there was a bias that school board members and superintendents have to not hire younger female educators as high school principals.

The Eckman (2004) study found some similarities between male and female high school principals. Although both females and males were willing to relocate to another geographic area to become a high school principal, female high school principals had a higher chance of being hired in their own districts than male high school principals. Further, even though female educational administrators had different and lower career aspirations than male educational administrators (Blout, 1998), Eckman's (2004) the study indicated that the majority of the female and male high school principals were not

interested in becoming a superintendent. The study also indicated that female and male high school principals struggled to balance their role commitments as they experienced role conflict. They both experienced moderate levels of job satisfaction. The higher levels of job satisfaction were the result of more years served as a high school principal.

The above literature suggests that the future recruitment and retention of female and male high school principals and superintendents will be affected by the increased role conflict resulting from the difficulty to balance personal and professional lives and for women, the glass escalator for men. Eckman (2004), for example, recommends that issues of role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction of administrators must be addressed, otherwise, the pool of qualified applicants for the high school principalship in particular will not increase. In the study, it is stated, "This contributes to the problem of attracting more applicants to the position of superintendent, because the high school principal position has been considered a direct career path to the superintendency."

Latina School Administrators

Studies that have examined the work attitudes and experiences of educational administrators have not often included Latina/o leaders. A small set of studies have examined Latina women administrators' perspectives specifically. These studies have focused on Latina women administrators' perspectives on their work experiences and careers including the importance of mentoring, for both site and central office positions. This section of the literature review summarizes three studies focused on Latina women followed by a study conducted among a primarily White, non-Latino administrator sample but includes implications for study among Latinas. Included in this section are

Mendez-Morse (2000) and Ortiz (2001), focused on Latina leadership in the superintendency, and Metzger (2003).

Mendez-Morse (2000) stated that Latinas in superintendent positions throughout the nation are atypical as a result of the stereotype of what a Latina/Hispanic woman is or can be, the limited acknowledgment of historical Latina leaders, and the small amount of research that focuses on minority female educational leaders. She further indicated that the reasons for limited number of research on Latina leaders were few researchers were interested in studying Latinas' lives and there were few Latinas serving in superintendent or administrative positions. The article interchangeably uses the words Latina(s) and Hispanic to refer to Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Spanish, Central American, or South American descent.

Mendez-Morse (2000) provided an overview of issues confronting Latina educational leaders. She shared the research from Andrade (1982) and Miranda and Enriquez (1979) that explains the stereotype of Hispanic women in three areas dealing with issues inside and outside of the home. One area was male domination by father, husband, or male sibling. The second area was fulfilling primary responsibilities of being a wife, mother, and maintaining the home. A third area was limited access to educational and work opportunities outside of the home.

The stereotype of Hispanic women contributed to the perception that Latinas can not be leaders. Nevertheless, Mendez-Morse (2000) demonstrated through brief historical accounts and research findings of Latina leaders that Latina leaders did not adhere to this

stereotype. A small sampling of studies provided by Mendez-Morse are provided here. Carranza's (1988) survey of Hispanic professional and entrepreneurial women found that they received encouragement and support from their spouses (p. 9). In the Colon Gibson (1992, as cited in Mendez-Morse) study of 48 Hispanic female educational administrators in New Jersey reported that their husbands accommodated schedules and provided moral support. Their husbands assisted with housework, shopping, childcare, and helped with studies.

Another type of support cited by Mendez-Morse (2000) that Latina leaders have is the support and encouragement of their family. Hence, role conflict resulting from demands of an educational administrative position and primary homemaker was not a significant issue according to Avery (1982). After interviewing seventeen Hispanic women who completed graduate degrees, Gandara (1982) found significant, strong, parental influence and support in acquiring their educational goals. In Avery's (1982) study of Hispanic women of accomplishment, 40% Hispanic women had graduate degrees. These 40% of Hispanic women had parent who were unskilled laborers, service workers, craftsmen, or homemakers. Their educational backgrounds were minimal.

The family provided role models for Latina leaders when there were none available. Campbell's (1993, as cited in Mendez-Morse, 2004) findings of Mexican American elementary school principals' role models or mentors were their mothers. In Gandara's (1982) study, the Hispanic women indicated that their mothers were strong role models for them.

According to Mendez-Morse's (2000) review of pertinent literature in the area, despite the few mentors, role models, or sponsors for Latina leaders, "Hispanic women

have created their own paths of leadership development” (Herrera, 1987, p. 21, as cited in Mendez-Morse). These Latina leaders who create their own paths without an example were trailblazers or pioneers. A follow-up to this study (Mendez-Morse, 2004) explored mentoring aspects among 6 Latina administrators in Texas, finding that these leaders created their own path by constructing "a mentor from varied sources that collectively met their specific needs and priorities" (p. 561). A goal of the study was to identify the role models and mentors of these women and to determine whether the role models and mentors were supportive to the leadership roles of these women. The primary goal of the study was to identify the motivational factors for pursuing a career in educational administration.

Mendez-Morse (2004) defined a role model as someone whose characteristics or traits another individual would want to emulate. The definition for mentor was someone who actively helps, supports, or teaches someone else how to do a job so that she will succeed. The findings of the study indicated that the significant role models and mentors of the six Latina educational leaders were from nonprofessional areas of the women’s lives. The six Latina educational leaders sought their mentors from various sources that met their specific needs and priorities.

Additional information from the study indicated that there was limited knowledge of how Latinas are similar to or different from White or other minority female educational leaders. Also, the participation of minority women in educational leadership positions remained minimal (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Montenegro, 1993; Ortiz, 2001). Mendez-Morse stated that by studying the unique characteristics of various minority female educational leaders, a study can contribute to expanding the

understanding of leadership in general and recognition of the importance of certain abilities. The study indicated that other research which includes minority women administrators revealed that female administrators are alike in having experienced limited recruitment, a focus on elementary school or curriculum areas, and many more years of teaching experiences than their male counterparts. The differences between minority and non-minority female administrators were that many minority female educational leaders lacked sponsorships or mentors. They were largely leaders of predominately minority student campuses or districts, and contended with the doubt burden of ethnic or racial and gender stereotyping (Colon Gibson, 1992; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Mendez-Morse, 1997; Ortiz & Venegas, 1978).

Mendez-Morse's (2004) study indicated that identifying the similarities expands understanding of the impact of gender in educational administration. Gardiner et al. (2000) state that the “dominant culture of educational administration is androcentric, meaning informed by white, male norms” and contend that mentoring is a “part of this androcentric culture of educational administration” (p.1). The androcentric culture of educational administration was the majority of White males. There was a high likelihood that their protégés would also be White males.

Individuals who were different in gender, race or ethnicity or both from the androcentric culture of educational administration had a reduced chance of being noticed as potential educational leaders. Also, the traditional means that those who were not likely to support the dominant discourse were rarely chosen (Grogan, 1999).

Unfortunately, those who did not look like the mentors or who did not think like the

mentors will not be selected. The lost contribution of these ignored protégés or potential educational leaders, Grogan suggests, is a tremendous loss to society.

In a final study, Ortiz (2001) provided an empirical investigation of Latina school administrators focused on the district superintendency. She noted that with a growing Latino student population in the U.S., school district top leadership would benefit from leaders who represented the community's population. Ortiz observed the scarcity of Latina district superintendents; for example, in medium-sized districts at the time of her study in 2001 there were approximately 25 to 30 such superintendents. In her qualitative study, Ortiz explored the perspectives of three Latina superintendents on their careers, and further specifically employed the perspective of social capital to analyze their perspectives. The social capital perspective included a focus on such properties of "social structure" as a "network consisting of social ties between members" (p. 62). These networks created, according to Ortiz,

both horizontal and vertical relationships (Putnam, 1993). Horizontal relationships are those among relative equals, and vertical relationships are those among individuals with differing status in which one partner is advantaged over the other. . . . The total network may be thought of as a web where each member is embedded. . . . For example, does a Latina superintendent's horizontal network include other superintendents, school board members, and other community influentials and does her vertical network consist of community, state, and national leaders as well as community, organization, and school members? The value of the network to the district is the extent to which

the Latina is connected to those the school district is not, but needs to successfully provide educational services to its community. (p. 62)

Ortiz (2001) further noted that women "develop multilayered networks to gain access to the superintendency" (p. 68) but may not have access to members who are influential as those of men. Further, women's multi-layered networks include "professional connections, multiple mentors from inside and outside their immediate circles, and groups who may not appear immediately beneficial but may be in the future are established and maintained" (p. 68).

Ortiz's (2001) study specifically focused on the above social structures including networks "as a resource for action" (p. 59) for Latina superintendents. The perspectives of three superintendents in different contexts were outlined: Ms. Contreras, a superintendent of a small rural district; Dr. Duran, who led a desirable school district within the state; and Dr. Singer, a superintendent of a large urban district. Interestingly, the superintendents were selected from a larger data base of 12 Latina superintendents; with these three selected as illustrating "the type and extensiveness of social networks to which these women are connected." Ortiz found that there were different types of social relationships and social capital that became important for each superintendent. For example, the analysis of Dr. Duran's structure of social relations showed that her embeddedness in social relations was limited to areas that could be viewed as problematic and in need of fixing. Therefore, her relationships were primarily "professional and technical." Dr. Singer's social capital, by contrast, showed a dense embeddedness within multiple district areas, whereby she was able to improve school district performance "at all levels" (p. 75). By providing such contrasts, Ortiz's study

showed the relevance of social capital theory for understanding the career progression of Latina superintendents within the context of these leaders' social relations. Further study would include other groups of administrators such as assistant superintendents and principals, and/or administrators within different reform contexts.

Finally Metzger (2003) provided a study that drew on a psychological as opposed to a social capital perspective to study educational leaders' work experiences more generally. Metzger explored the self/inner development of educational administrators primarily utilized a sample of White, non-Latino leaders (superintendents and college deans), as well as two Latina/Hispanic administrators. However, the study suggested a number of concepts that might be usefully applied using larger samples of Latina leaders. For example, Metzger (2003) made several arguments concerning the work orientations of educational administrators that appear to deserve more examination among Latina leaders. She suggested that self/inner development was important for educational leaders, adding that administrators in her study had an “awareness of the current trend and the importance of focusing attention on inner and spiritual dimensions of leadership” (p. 683). She maintained that self/inner development was likely associated with the following six themes: Balance, Self-actualization, Personal improvement, values, inner focus, and relationships. These factors appeared similar to studies citing personal qualities of education leaders including fostering loyalty, displaying humility, and providing recognition to others (Bolman & Deal, 2011; Miskel, Fevurly, & Stewart, 1979). Some of these characteristics also appear akin to Magdaleno's (2011) call for Latina and Latino school leaders who are grounded in values such as "fairness" "sharing of power" and "supportiveness" (p. 87).

Administrative Work in Teams

In an effort to ascertain potential variables that may affect the perception of Latina's success in positions of leadership in public schools, it is important to determine the significance of teamwork as a potential recurrent theme that may affect efficacy as effective educational leaders and how subjects perceive themselves in their role in the teamwork process. Teamwork within a public school setting plays a significant role in the success and efficiency of operation within a California public school.

Although the classic view of administration has been that of a leader-follower, more recent conceptions of leadership have complicated this view by suggesting less hierarchical and more distributed views of leadership (Spillane, 2001). In contemporary leadership literature, the leader must increasingly be concerned with leading collaborative work groups in educational organizations and with multi- rather than uni- directions of influence. This less hierarchical view has also been echoed by authors writing on Latino/a leaders specifically (Magdaleno, 2006). Ortiz's (2001) conception of multilayered networks that leaders draw on, suggests that analyses are needed of who leaders' networks are, and how within their spheres of influence, leaders build trust and overcome dysfunctional group situations.

Team dysfunctions. The literature focused on team dysfunctions (Lencioni, 2002; 2005) suggested the fragility of team arrangements in educational administration. It also suggested productive ways that team dysfunctions may be overcome. Generally, academic literature on the design of effective groups (Hackman, 1987) appeared helpful for overcoming some of these barriers in understanding what occurs when groups

collaborate, what conditions influence their effectiveness, and member influences on the effectiveness of groups.

Lencioni (2002) provided a clear, concise, and contemporary guide to using his notions of team dysfunction, termed the Five Dysfunctions model. In addition to identifying team dysfunctions, the model contained steps to overcome these problematic areas of team functioning identified by Lencioni in order to build cohesiveness and effectiveness among team members. Writing primarily for business audiences, Lencioni indicated that it was difficult to build a cohesive team, but it was not complicated. The critical key was to keep the design of teamwork simple.

Expanding on this notion, Lencioni (2005) suggested that teamwork requires courage and persistence especially in today's era of informational ubiquity and "nanosecond" change. Teamwork "can't be bought and it can't be attained by hiring an intellectual giant from the world's best business school" (p. 4). The success in an organization, according to Lencioni, depended on the sustainability of the team's unity. Team members can focus on the team's goal and put their individual needs aside; in this way, they were able to eliminate confusion and political noise. Hence, the team accomplished more in a shorter cost-effective time period with a sense of connection and belonging.

The five dysfunctions identified by Lencioni (2002; 2005) were the following: absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results. The dysfunctions were not five distinct issues, but they were interrelated. If one of the dysfunction existed, teamwork deteriorated. Specific ideas

associated with each dysfunction are presented in the Appendix, with a brief summary of each below.

The first dysfunction was *absence of trust*. Team members may not allow themselves to be vulnerable by sharing their mistakes and weaknesses. This lack of vulnerability made it difficult to build a foundation for trust (Lencioni, 2002). The second dysfunction was *fear of conflict*. If team members lack trust, it would be difficult for the team members to engage in passionate discussion or debate. The third dysfunction was *lack of commitment*. It was crucial that team members engage in passionate debates. This lack of healthy conflict ensured that team members will not be able to commit to decisions. The fourth dysfunction was *avoidance of accountability*. If the team members were unable to commit to a plan, they would not be able to hold their team members accountable on counterproductive behaviors and actions. The fifth dysfunction was *inattention to results*. If team members failed to hold members accountable for counterproductive behaviors, the team would be divided. The members were likely to put their own needs or the needs of their departments above the established team goal(s). A cohesive team, by contrast, trusts one another, engages in healthy conflict, commits to decisions and plans, holds team members accountable to adhering decisions and plans, and focuses on achieving established goal(s).

Having identified the above dysfunctions, Lencioni (2002; 2005) also provided examples of strategies of a cohesive team according to each dysfunction. That is, Lencioni provided a field guide containing practical tools to assist leaders in overcoming the five dysfunctions of a team. For example, for the first dysfunction, members of trusting teams will admit weaknesses and mistakes, ask for help, accept questions and

input about their areas of responsibility, and take risks in offering feedback assistance. A list with some of the specific characteristics of these remedies to team dysfunctions is also found in the Appendix, and they are briefly summarized below.

According to Lencioni (2002), trust was the foundation of teamwork. In order to build trust among team members, each member must be able to be vulnerable. This takes time to accomplish. Once trust is established, it must be maintained over time. Further, to handle conflict in teams, members must possess trust in order to engage in productive debate. The team must create conflict norms that are clear among the members. Although there may be occasional personal conflict, this should not prevent the team from having regular, fruitful discussions. Further, to achieve commitment in teams, assumptions and ambiguity must be avoided. There must be clarity in the sense that great teams agree to disagree, but then commit to the team's decision. Consensus is not a requirement for team buy-in. To embrace accountability within a team, team members will directly hold each other accountable during meetings. Further, the leadership must be willing to address difficult issues to create a culture of accountability. Finally, to focus on results, a team must eliminate ambiguity and individual interpretation only. The team must be results-oriented and publicly clarify desired results. The team keeps the results visible as it accomplishes them.

Thus, Lencioni (2002, 2005) provides a model and approach that contains actionable steps to overcome five dysfunctions in a team in order to build a cohesive and effective team. He states, "Success is not a matter of mastering subtle, sophisticated theory, but rather of embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 220).

Relationship of Literature Reviewed to the Current Study

As evidenced in the related body of knowledge on the subject of Latina's and public school leadership, the work of administrators is growing in complexity. Furthermore, recent conceptions of leadership have been moving away from hierarchical notions of leadership focusing on a leader-follower relationship towards understanding leadership through a more collaborative approach. Furthermore, literature on Latina leaders reviewed in this section has emphasized that with a growing Latino student population in the U.S., school district leadership would benefit from leaders who represented the community's population (Ortiz, 2001). Ortiz observed the scarcity of Latina district superintendents; for example. Her social capital perspective included a focus on such properties of "social structure" as a "network consisting of social ties between members" (p. 62). In her study of superintendents, she suggested that leaders who are connected to external as well as internal networks may be more successful. Further, Mendez-Morse emphasized the quality of mentoring relationships that Latina leaders are able to establish.

Chapter Three

Methodology

There exists a relative lack of information describing the perspectives, leadership, and career experiences of Latina/o school leaders. Thus, this study's purposes were the following four:

- 1) to address the relative lack of research pertaining to the perspectives of California Latina school leaders;
- 2) to describe and analyze the experiences that prepared them to become a leader and the challenges that they encountered, including role stress;
- 3) to investigate how they acquired mentors, who they chose to be their role models, and how they perceive their gender influencing their opportunities to become leaders; and
- 4) to investigate their peer-colleague interactions.

Specifically, Mendez-Morse's framework (2000; 2004) was utilized to examine Latina educational leaders perspectives on how they sought mentors from various sources that met their specific needs and priorities, Eckman (2004) was among the literature examined on the role leadership plays in the role stress confronting leaders, and Ortiz (2001) was drawn on to explore how these leaders built trust and dealt with conflict in their collegial interactions.

The following research questions provided a framework in which the researcher was be able to investigate Latina leaders' perceptions on leadership.

- Research Question 1: How have Latinas in K-12 public education a) acquired and sustained their leadership and b) advanced as administrators? What role has mentoring played?
- Research Question 2: What challenges and barriers have Latina leaders experienced as they led stakeholders in the K-12 public education institutions? What supports are needed to help overcome challenges?
- Research Question 3: What networks do Latina leaders seek to build and utilize?

Sources of Data

Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, five Latina educational administrators actively employed in a southern California unified public school district (k-12) were selected using a purposive sampling population technique. Purposive sampling focused on selecting women leaders with experience in K-12 administration/governance whose careers were long enough that they could offer reflection concerning their administration advancement as well as challenges and barriers. Participants in the study were solicited individually to be involved in this study. Each participant was asked questions regarding their ethnicity prior to being selected for participation in this study to insure homogeneity of the sample population and increase validity of the overall study. Those participants reporting to be Hispanic/Latina descent were selected. Due to the sensitive nature of data collected, participants in this study were informed that any personal identifiable information would be kept confidential.

Private, individual one-to-one interviews with each participant were scheduled and conducted in ninety-minute intervals for the purposes of data collection related to Latina educational leaders perceived barriers that have affected their professional

educational career (positively or negatively). Using a formatted interview guide of relevant questions (Appendix A), each participant was asked all questions from the guide to ensure comparison for this study. This was done to diminish the potential for extraneous variability and improve overall validity of the study. Responses to the interviews were audio-recorded. Written field notes were collected during each interview to identify any emotionally salient response. The audio-recorded data was transcribed. The analysis of the data focused on the perceived barriers of Latina school leaders in California public K-12 schools.

It is relevant to note that phenomenology in social sciences is the study of participants' life experiences and respective consequent meanings. Researchers suggest that this method attempts to understand and interpret these meanings with depth and richness (Van Maanen, 1990). Phenomenology focuses on revealing meaning versus defending an argument or creating a theory (Flood, 2010). Using this approach, the collection of the data for this research process included a description of situations that were experienced by the participant in their daily life (Flood, 2010). This approach required me as the researcher to obtain descriptions from the participants about the phenomena and remain mindful to separate her own judgment and biases from the actual data collected. Finally, I analyzed the experiences of the participants in this study and grouped them in to an agreed consciousness, in order to interpret the meaning of the phenomena as experienced by the participants (Crotty, 1998; Flood, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection Procedures

The goal was to facilitate valid data collection by developing trust and rapport with the participants. In order to establish a relationship that fostered a highly personal

exchange, it was important that the participants perceived me to be respectful, an empathetic listener, honor shared information, and ethical. It was important that the type of interview I developed needed to convey that, “the intent is to understand informants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes” (Brenner, 2006, pp. 357) In agreement, Kvale (1996) stated,

In a research setting it is up to the interviewer to create in a short time a contact that allows the interaction to get beyond merely a polite conversation or exchange of ideas. The interviewer must establish an atmosphere in which the subject feels safe enough to talk freely about his or her experiences and feelings (p. 125).

Finally, there was another potential challenge. The participants were Latina educational leaders ranging in mid-thirties to mid-sixties with tremendous job responsibilities. The level of trust to share job related experiences and personal experiences was very high. Although I myself was a Latina educational leader, the participants had to be able to trust me.

According to Ryen (2001), “several fieldwork reports describe insider-outsider challenges faced by researchers conducting ethnic interviews within their own societies” (pp. 336). It was important that I established transparency, clear communication, emphasized that I am a woman foremost, and that our powerful connection was womanhood (Ryen, 2001).

I chose an ethnographic qualitative interview that would be most effective in allowing me to establish rapport, trust, transparency, and respect. At one point, I considered doing a life story interview. The consulting I sought from the participants would come from their life experiences. It would be their perspectives on how they led a

public school and their interactions with others. According to Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, and McKinney (2012),

They [life stories] allow us to learn more than almost any other methodology about individual lives and society from one person's perspective. Life stories make connections, shed light on the possible paths through life, and lead us to our deepest feelings, the values we live by, and the commonalities of life...The more we share our own stories, the closer we all become.

A life story interview approach can create a deeper bond between the interviewer and participant, and bring about change as a result of the information shared and the meaning that is felt. However, the length of a life story interview can be one-hour or it can be two one-hour or three one-hour interviews (Gubrium, et al., 2012). I decided to not to do a life story interview, but to incorporate some of the life story interview's primary values into my ethnographic qualitative interview. These values included ensuring the story teller shares her/his story; the interviewer is sympathetic in order to achieve a mutually equitable and beneficial outcome; the interviewer guides and assists the story teller in bringing forth the uniqueness of the story; the interviewer builds a respectful relationships with the story teller; the interviewer is providing a service to the storyteller as gathering information for the research; the interviewer assist in revealing who the storyteller is and, despite differences, what is the connection between human beings; and experiences the transformative experience from the storyteller's life story (Gubrium, et al., 2012).

In order for me to understand the participants' perspectives on female educational leadership, I needed to grasp the participants' point of views, their relation to life, and

realize their vision of their world (Spradley, 1979). I needed to formulate questions that were ordered, worded, and would provoke the participants to respond honestly, completely, and thoroughly. Murphy (1980) "suggested challenging questions that can be . . . confrontational or pointed but at times particularly productive" (as cited in Brenner, p. 364).

I chose to do grand tour questions and probes. Since grand tour questions are used by cognitive anthropologists and educational researchers, I decided to adopt these types of questions. Furthermore, cognitive ethnographers believe that "grand tour questions are just the beginning of the interview journey and are followed by a variety of questions that probe deeper into the domains uncovered through the grand tour initiation (Brenner, 2006)." The final interview protocol contained a statement of purpose, ten grand tour questions, seventeen probe questions, and one concluding question. The statement of purpose was simple, straightforward, and understandable. It explained that information was important, the reasons for the important information, the purpose of the interview, and the confidentiality of the information shared during the interview (Patton, 2002). Overall, the design of the questions were to provide a natural flow of shared information, to provide transparency, and to ensure the clear communication in order to minimize the insider-outsider problem (Ryen, 2002, as cited in Brenner, 2006).

Treatment of the data was similar in design to Hatch (2002) in that inductive analysis was the basis for this study's data collection. Understanding the specific elements of each transcription from the collected data could be expected to generate meaningful units, defined as individual statements that stand alone that provide meaning (Hatch, 2002). The researcher made connections between and among the meaningful

units identified among the transcriptions as a whole. Inductive analysis was used to determine patterns of meaning to provide general statements about the phenomenon of Latina school leaders' perceptions of barriers in their professional careers, by examining the patterns and recurrent themes interpreted from the data, which was generated by a paid private transcriber. The data analysis process included reading the individual transcribed audio-recorded interviews of each participant, and breaking the text into meaningful themes, and then assigning these themes into a particular domain of categorical perception. This same process was used with the field note data and integrated with participants' responses. The resulting unique domains were groupings that were aggregated elements of transcribed data that provide semantic relationships to inform the researcher (Hatch, 2002). Transcribed data and field notes were coded and grouped into salient domains to identify which themes carried a stronger valance factor or meaning as observed across participant interviews. The researcher examined the domains within individual interviews and across interviews to determine the most frequent and salient domains/themes. As part of the qualitative vetting process, the researcher re-read the resulting data and domains to ensure that the initial findings were accurate. The researcher adjusted and refined the assigned domains after multiple readings of the transcriptions and meaning units to ensure that there was a consistent and substantial match between the researchers' findings and the participants' interview responses. In addition, the researcher generated a master outline that expressed relationships within and among the domains developed. The outline provided the basis of exploratory findings about the phenomena investigated.

In summary, the goals of the analysis were to explore:

- 1) How have Latinas in K-12 public education a) acquired and sustained their leadership and b) advanced as administrators? What role has mentoring played?
- 2) What challenges and barriers have Latina leaders experienced as they led stakeholders in the K-12 public education institutions? What supports are needed to help overcome challenges?
- 3) What networks do Latina leaders seek to build and utilize?

Chapter Four

Presentation of Cases

Six participants were interviewed for this study: Alejandra, Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza². All six participants were currently working as educational administrators, and had professional experience in schools from before their time as educational leaders. The participants were given pseudonyms that fit with the main themes in their interviews. In this chapter, I will present the following from each participant: background, experiences with mentoring, leadership roles, views on female/male leadership, goals and challenges, views on Latina leaders, and networks.

Alejandra

Alejandra's pseudonym means "Protector of Humanity."

Background and mentoring. At the time of this study, Alejandra worked as the school district coordinator of Administrative Services and Communications Officer for a southern California K-12 school district. In describing her responsibilities, she notes:

I just do what needs to be done. It involves many facets [like] working [in] communications within the district's external and internal communications [and] working on emergencies. It's a 24/7 job in a lot of ways; because you always have to keep your phone with you...you never know when something's going to happen. Alejandra explained that her work is a reflection of her capabilities and work ethics.

Her father taught her to do her very best in whatever she does,

I like creativity and the latitude...I don't have someone who's watching over me...I'm harder on myself [than] anyone else is on [themselves]... because I want my work to reflect my capabilities and my ethics ...My dad used to always say,

² All names are pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

‘Whatever you do, even if it's pumping gas, you do the best job you can’...I never forgot that. I've always heard him in my head for all my life pretty much giving me some direction of saying your name is on it, make [it] good.

Although Alejandra’s father was a strong influence in her life, she did not indicate that her father was a mentor. She described her father as a disciplinarian and his important role in the family:

He had a very strong influence—sometimes negative, sometimes positive—but, yes, he was quite the disciplinarian. He had pretty much very little formal education. He used to kind of joke but—not really—he went to the sixth grade and did every grade twice... because he was a migrant farm laborer...he had very little. His opportunities were limited. His father was an alcoholic and [at a very early age] he basically became the patriarch of his own family. He had a family to support and he did whatever he had to do he set the standard again of expectations of himself that he put on his children...he worked in the cannery for 40 years and never missed a day. He was very proud of that...he never missed one day. So he set an example that I know is part of what I live by.

Upon her graduation from high school, the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) accepted her as a student. Her father was not prepared to allow her to attend a university that was far from home. She noted,

My dad was my roadblock. ...I had been accepted to UCSB right after high school... and gotten their financial aid packet. I gave it to my dad and said, ‘I need you to sign this. I filled out all the paperwork and everything and I would come in as a freshman’...he said, ‘well I just want you [to] know that if I sign this,

you could never come home again' ...I really struggled with that because...he meant it. ...My Dad, he was really loved by his brothers and sisters and he ran the household with an iron fist not only with his immediate family, but with his brothers and sisters, his extended family. So... I got a job ...I was finishing up high school...taking classes, because I knew that if I left home I would not have been able to go back home again. He wouldn't let me in. I just knew that was going to happen because that was his threat. He would make good on it. So I will just stay home and I'll work. It took me three years to go through college...

Alejandra felt that her confidence increased as she emotionally matured and listened to her mentor's positive counsel and support. As she decided to transfer to UCSB, she found encouragement and support from her mother:

My mother had been quietly—during these three years—working on [my Dad]...talking to him privately cause...she would never cross him publicly. So she would just quietly work behind the scenes...she kept telling me, 'Be patient, be patient, he'll change his mind'. So one day, he comes up to me—this is after I had been working for three years, trying to get enough credit, [and] save money, because, basically, I was preparing to go and, even if he was going to close the door on me...—and says, 'If you decide to go away to college, it's okay'.

Alejandra believed her father's expectations of her were based on the roles of other women in his family, that of mother and wife. None of her Tias (aunts) completed any education beyond elementary school. She indicated that she grew up in a 'Barrio'—a low-income neighborhood, where the majority of residents were Mexicans or Latinos—which was located in Modesto, California. Alejandra shared a story that illustrated her

father's expectations, or lack of, for her:

I remember standing in the doorway of the house he built...himself. It was just a little house in a barrio in Modesto...He [watched] my brothers [who] were...younger than [me]...they were horsing around on the floor, and I remember him standing there [and] saying, 'You know my sons [are] going to be a lawyer'. Or 'My sons [are] going to be a doctor'. Or my sons [are] going to be...' He never said anything about me...I thought, 'He doesn't have any dreams for me'...so I never forgot that. That really propelled me in a certain sense because...only one time [when I was in high school] he did say, 'You know...you might be able to get a job in the front office of the cannery'. None of the women in his family had done anything more than cannery work, so he didn't know how to dream any bigger...I don't fault him. I didn't understand it at the time, but in retrospect...how could [I] have expected more from him? He came from a migrant family and women had a different role. So how could I expect him to have a vision that was outside of ...that world [that] he lived in; that he grew up in?

Alejandra's mother quietly helped her father change his mind, and supported her daughter as she continued in her education. Her mother was a middle sibling of a total of six who lived in a small community, and a high school graduate with some community college education. She had learned how to type and she worked in bookkeeping for a small appliance company. She had also worked in canneries with her sisters. Only her mother's youngest sister attended high school – all of her other siblings did not. The youngest sister attended the University of San Francisco to study in the Nursing program. Alejandra stated,

[My mother] may have dreamed for more than [what] she [did]...but she did differently than her sisters...she was...the only one that had that kind of vision not for herself but her children. So she...would [quietly] take my brothers... and me...to the library to read books...if she had the opportunity, she would...travel more...but that wasn't her circumstance...she always worked behind the scenes with my Dad because he was such a strict authoritarian disciplinarian and she would be the loving mother behind the scenes.

Alejandra indicated that her mother's education influenced her mother's involvement in her children's education:

She was well read. She was always interested in news. She never pressured us, but she supported us in what we did and she was one of the only room mothers in PTA. She took an interest in our school. My mother...even though she did not have a lot of formal education, she dreamed big for her kids and she wanted us to achieve. So she was our cheering section, our quiet cheering section for all of us.

Besides her mother, Alejandra mentioned three mentors during her three years at community college: two community college counselors and a mentor from her place of employment. The two counselors supported her and encouraged her to pursue a higher education degree: "I had two great counselors who were very supportive. ...They were the first people who had shown some involvement, caring, compassion, direction. They were the first two individuals at the community college level that gave me some spark...that I could go beyond high school."

The third mentor was especially supportive. While attending community college, Alejandra secured a job in a low income housing organization called self-help housing.

Here she met her "incredible mentor" Peggy, a White female from New York who traveled to and lived in South American and Latin America. Peggy was fluent in Spanish and she had worked for the World Bank. Peggy just "took [Alejandra] under her wing and was like a big sister." Alejandra described in detail the kind of mentor Peggy was to her:

She was several years older than I was—maybe 6-8 years—she'd already been in college and graduated...she was a really incredible mentor to me. She kept saying, 'Chica, you got to challenge yourself. You got to keep going. Don't let your Dad stand in the way. You're going to be able to make it'...she was a great friend and a great mentor.

When Alejandra completed her undergraduate degree from UCSB, she applied to graduate schools, such as MIT. Alejandra shared that she was scared to relocate to an area that she has never visited. Peggy encouraged her to attend MIT by boosting Alejandra's self-esteem,

So...I got...accepted to several colleges including MIT... [Peggy] was on the East Coast, at that time...and she said, 'You got to come because if they accepted you, they're investing in you...if they are investing in you, they will not let you lose until you're successful. You got to try this'. I was scared to death because I've never been to the East Coast and Peggy was my mentor. She was just out there bolstering my sense of self.

Another person who supported her as she applied to graduate schools was her fiancé. They met while at UCSB, and would eventually marry. He served as a mentor to her, too, helping her through some daunting experiences:

I applied to UC Berkeley in education and I didn't get accepted there. But I applied to MIT, [their] housing [program], because I have all this housing experience... [and] they accepted me. ... [My fiancé]...was my cheerleader, too. He kept saying, 'This is the chance of a lifetime. You need to do this. If this is meant to be, our relationship will work out. Don't worry, we'll make it work'.

Alejandra accepted the invitation to attend MIT located in Boston, Massachusetts. She experienced culture shock. She commented, "I got there. I thought, 'I'm in a hell-hole here. This is not a good idea. I made a mistake'. Alejandra arrived in Boston during the summer season. The hot humid and steamy temperature was unbearable, and she questioned whether she made the right decision:

I thought, 'Oh my God, what have I done?'...I remember calling [my fiancé and] saying, 'You know, I think I need to be on the next airplane to come back to Santa Barbara,' and he said, 'Nope, you're going to stick it out, we're going to work through this together'. So I've had so many guardian angels along the way. I have been so lucky because it was people who believed, I think, more than I believed in myself.

Over the next two years, Alejandra did her graduate work in city planning, completed an internship with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and worked in Senior Housing. Then she returned to Santa Barbara and married her fiancé. After having their first child, they started a business. Thirteen year later, her husband's health began to decline, so they decided to close the business so Alejandra could find employment. She applied to a public education foundation:

I ended up seeing this little tiny ad in the paper for somebody who had an interest in

education and in children and I applied and it turned out it was [a] public education foundation...and they said. ‘Well, have you written any grants?’...I said, ‘No, but I have written a graduate thesis. If I can get through that, I can surely write a grant’.

While Alejandra worked for the education foundation, her office was located on the school district’s premises. The superintendent noticed that Alejandra’s grants were successful, and that the increased revenue benefited students. As a result, the superintendent asked Alejandra to assist with some projects:

I got the first grant that the education foundation had ever given to public schools...[and the superintendent] called me one day and said ‘You know, I got a couple projects and I would like your help. Would you do it?’...I said, ‘Sure, ok.’ He said, ‘It’ll just be part-time’. Yet, it was part-time for about 24 hours. So pretty soon it was clear that I [was] in over my head because both agencies, the education foundation and the district wanted a lot more time than I had. So I made the decision to [work for] the school district, because...it was advantageous to me in terms of my family and...I loved what I did. It was [an] extension of what I was doing. So that’s how I ended up [in education].

When asked how a woman leader acquires a mentor as opposed to a male leader, Alejandra shared, “I think it depends on the opportunities that are available and what the situation is. I can’t speak for everyone, but I’m just thinking of what I’ve seen here working in education”.

Leadership role. Alejandra stated that a good leader builds trust in order to work cooperatively with others. The qualities that a strong leader possesses to develop trust are strong listening skills, respects other’s opinion, understands the backgrounds and

experiences of individuals, brings the best out of individuals during challenging times, avoids being judgmental, and connects with others. In the educational field, she explains it is especially important that a leader is sensitive to others:

We deal with families...there are a lot of Hispanic families who don't have the same level of education. So you got to be very careful that you're not talking down to someone, but being...respectful of the voices that everyone adds, to whatever the situation is, or the problem that needs to be solved. So I think in terms of what's important to be a good leader is to really be a respectful good listener.

Alejandra came from a family with limited resources and experiences. Therefore, she learned the value of caring for the few things that she owned and the skill to budget with limited funds. When reflecting on her struggles, Alejandra indicated that she was sympathetic to others who had similar struggles as he did. She commented,

Once I got through the struggle, it really helped me be sympathetic to kids who are in the same boat. I've spoken publicly about it. I've talked to girls at school sites...It's important because I know that there are still a lot of people out there who have the same kind of family situation that I had, where generally it's the father that rules the rest and may not have that vision of higher education.

Although Alejandra had to overcome barriers that were created by her father to attend colleges in a different geographic area, she shared that there were benefits. She got the chance to learn about herself since she was an older student with work experience:

So that really helped to prepare me because it's like I said, 'I'm not going to fail'. I'm not sure what it's going to take, but I'm not going to fail. I'm bound and

determined because there is no way I'm going to prove my dad [right]. I think he was waiting for me to fail, frankly, but I wasn't going to go back home without that degree

Her experiences growing up were valuable and provided qualities that she would need as an educational leader. In an environment where "the expectations just weren't there," she learned to say, 'I'm not going to let this be in the way. I don't know how it's going to happen, but I will find an answer.' She felt that this thinking helped her professionally because she "just keeps pushing until [she] gets where [she] needs to be." She learned to not let obstacles overwhelm her, and if they were too overwhelming, she stressed the importance of not giving up.

Alejandra saw that many of the same challenges she faced are still happening today for Latinas. But, although this makes her sad, she stressed the importance of moving forward, and providing inspiration for others in a similar situation.

Female/male leadership. Alejandra believed there was a difference in the performance of daily tasks among female and male administrators in California K-12 public education. She explained that there were differences in "how they carry themselves, how they process information, and how they respond." She clarified that both men and women were reflective, but that there is a gender divide in the sensitivity that they bring into difficult situations.

There was also a divide between the daily performance of Latina and non-Latina/Latino administrators. In her view, different childhood experiences meant that they related to students differently:

We all bring our experiences with us and I think if you have gone through a tough

childhood where maybe it was very different from someone else who had resources, different kinds of resources, you're going to be aware of that when you see that with other children. I know having come from a barrio...I can put myself in the same place as the [Latino] kids we serve and I know...how I filter information goes through that lens because I get it. I had challenges in family life and in the neighborhood I grew up in. It's not a lot different than what I see here. And so I bring that to the table whether consciously or subconsciously.

For Alejandra, other differences were present in leadership styles, in the challenges and strengths of male and female leaders. Alejandra spoke specifically about maternal compassion: "They identify especially well and just have a sense of the maternal side...versus the males. ...I do sense that there's a real identification with the kids that they're working with and also because of the principals knowing their families well." She continued to explain that those with maternal compassion were better listeners and were more forgiving, which she observed in situations where the "women take the time to stop and figure out why something happened."

Another challenge where Alejandra saw a difference was in the balance of work and home. She expanded on how Latina leaders encounter this challenge:

Ultimately as a female leader—I'm not sure if it's society that's pushing or you pushing yourself—you're trying to achieve and take care of everything and everybody. And I'm not sure that when the male leader goes home that they have that same sort of burden. Or that thing that says you still have to cook the meal...you still have to take care of the household...the laundry still has to be done and all that other stuff. I don't see that things are the same because every one of the

male leaders that I've seen here are either married or got somebody else to take care of that. Where the women go home and you still have to do all the other stuff that gets taken care of. So there is an inequality that exists.

Alejandra described how she viewed responsibilities to her family conflicting with her work. She shared that although her children were grown, her husband was ill. This was difficult for her to balance her demanding work and her family needs. As her husband's health deteriorated, she felt the need to be closer to him. She commented that it was not easy trying to meet her work needs and her husband's needs. Her husband was very sympathetic and he understood her job. Her supervisors also supported her:

I was very lucky that the superintendents... understood. They supported me and [they] said, 'You do what you got to do and don't worry, get it taken care of, or we will help you'...because they knew I would come up with whatever it was that I said I would do the day that I said I would and I would do it. I just needed some latitude and that's some flexibility and so I was very lucky that I did get that throughout the years...and from the very beginning, I even had...a special telephone line hooked up to my computer at home that was a district line so that I could work from home.

For Alejandra, the difficulty of balancing her work responsibilities with her family responsibilities was moderated by an understanding workplace and colleagues.

An additional challenge was the ease of working in teams. Alejandra asserted that it was easier for women to work in teams because they are nurturing individuals who naturally seek solutions. She said they feel like they "need to get things done, and they see the problem." Alejandra explained this difference as "just part of the way that

[women are] raised.” Alejandra indicated that when women work in teams, they listen to one another to problem solve. She shared that women naturally gravitate towards problem solving as a group. In contrast, the men “first try to figure it out on their own and then reach out for help,” which she thought they were slower to do than women. She also believed that this attitude existed regardless of whether the men were “Latinos or Anglos.”

Goals and challenges. When asked what her goals in California K-12 public school education are, and what prevents her from being successful in meeting her goals, Alejandra stated that her goals are based on serving students. Some of the barriers that make it difficult for her to successfully meet her goals were the amount of time in a day, and her own expectations of herself. Because “there are kids at the end of everything [she does],” Alejandra said she often works into the night, sometimes until “two in the morning.” She felt as if she is harder on herself than others are, and gets frustrated if she feels like she has not accomplished what she set out to do for the day.

But there were some frustrations that Alejandra faced. First off, she did not feel comfortable with technology, because “it is not part of the world [she] grew up in.” Another frustration is a decline in support from her superintendent. For the most part she has had the support of the superintendents that she worked for: “I’ve always had again the trust and understanding of the superintendents that I’ve worked for previously and that made me feel very much...valued.” But she does not feel that same level of support, and does not understand why: “I can’t speak for someone else. It’s just chemistry maybe.” She did discuss both a theory for the lack of support and the consequences of it. Alejandra explained that her new supervisor had a lack of trust in her work. Her previous

supervisors trusted her. She did not have to inform office staff when she was leaving, where she was going, and when she would return. But that has changed:

I always felt that I was doing what I needed to do, being where I needed to be, when I needed to do it, and I didn't have that level of accountability that I do now...I have to put it on the calendar and...everybody has to...see it and...I keep trying to say its organizational, but again on the flip side I feel like I'm on a leash now. now [I have] to keep this calendar that seems to be gospel to some people. It really just makes me always [look] at my watch and [try] to adjust my job around somebody else's timeline that's not real. I mean to me, again, it's as a fundamental...trust issue.

Alejandra's new constraints of accountability affect her creativity as a result of the stress to complete projects according to a supervisor's perception of a time frame. It forced her to be watching the clock instead of "finishing the conversation or following through on something." It also hampered aspects of her job that could not be "put on a time sheet," like cultivating donors.

Considering specifically the challenges for male and female administrators, Alejandra acknowledged that "we all have challenges." For example, for women "it depends what is thrown at [her.] Can you do it? Do you have the skill set, or is there something that you need to know when you don't?" This can be especially difficult in a meeting setting:

Sometimes the men are forceful in their dialogue...I think that makes it harder for the women to be heard because I think about how the dynamics [are at]...the table...the guys tend to be more aggressive and just popping off without thinking

about it...I think the males are just very quick to respond.

But Alejandra preferred to address challenges by assessing the situation and seek support in order to positively affect change. She stated that she keeps a positive outlook, commenting,

You just can't be defeated. Whatever it is, it's solvable but, for the most part, it's solvable and it means maybe turning to somebody else for support. Or being [persistent] to keep at it until you figure out what the answer is. and that's...really important to me because I hate going away without having a solution. And so to me, when you're looking at a challenge, break it down [and] figure it out. See if you come up with something that makes sense and you can live with...hopefully you're going to learn from [it].

She had experienced ethnically orientated interactions that she perceived as barriers towards reaching her professional and personal goals. Alejandra has meet people, only to have them say, "My, but she speaks English well." Her response to this was to say "well, geez Louise, what did you think? You may not have met me before, but now that you see me you somehow attribute something else or that I don't have an accent." But on the whole, even though she has "had some weird stuff happen," she believed that most of the people she worked with "have been colorblind and given [her] opportunities to show what [she] can do." Although there were individuals who had a preconceived notion of her as a Latina, Alejandra rationalized that these individuals were ignorant:

I just let it slide off my back because... they're perceiving what they think I am or who I am by my last name, by my color, by my stature...but I'm not going to worry about that. I'm not going to lose sleep over that. I may be offended initially,

but I try and look at it and say, ‘Look, judge me on my work. Judge me on what I do. And judge me on how I treat you.’ I’ve had some real interesting things where people...say the voice does not match with the vision or who they think they’re going to see at the other end. But that’s ok, that’s their problem not mine.

Latina leaders. When considering whether Latinas are systematically excluded from positions of authority from within California K-12 public school systems, Alejandra indicated that she did not have an aerial view. But based on her experience working in the district, it comforted her to see many people that look like her in classrooms and administrative positions: “I can't speak for other districts, but it delights me when I see women of color at the school sites that are doing a lot of different things.” According to Alejandra, the number of female Latina administrators in the district at the time of this study was larger than in previous years... Her teachers, administrators, and professors in the K-12 education experience and her university experience were White non-Latino. In her district, there were still few teachers that mirror her, but the support staff looked like her. She saw a difference between when she grew up and what she sees now: “I don't see as many [people of color in] the teaching staff...at least I do see people of color and...growing up...that was never the case...teachers were Anglos and everybody interacted with [me] was, but, at least today, I noticed that I'm...definitely aware of the fact that I see more folks that look like me. Could it be better? Probably.”

Networks and wrap-up. Alejandra emphasized the importance of networking among one's peers and colleagues so that they can support and learn from each other. She built and utilized peer networks, and felt they were important because “we share the same objectives and challenges.” A barrier to networking is that she does not see many other

Latinas in the same field, and that can be challenging because “you don’t have those same [Latino] experiences.” When asked about her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership/administrative work, Alejandra stated her major feeling of satisfaction is successfully addressing new challenges and ensuring that her employer will benefit from her skill set. In the process, she will gain new skills or knowledge. She commented, “I’ve worked on projects that I’ve had to figure it out from square one and continue building whatever that program or project was and do it essentially on your own.” In contrast, she did not feel as though she had experiences dissatisfaction:

I’ve been very fortunate. I haven’t had a lot of negative situations. I’ve generally worked with teams and managed to have very positive relationships. I rarely have had experiences where I felt like I came away empty handed or I didn’t meet the goals that I had set up for myself.

Berta

Berta’s pseudonym means “brilliant” and “bright.”

Background and mentoring. Berta currently works as the director of English Learners and parent engagement for a K-12 district, and has been in administration for 11 years. She was a principal in several different districts, as well as an elementary school teacher. Her move to administration, she explains, was to allow her to have an even larger impact on student learning:

[As a teacher] I wanted to be able to support students and help them learn. But I realized that there's only so much influence that you have. ... You might be able to influence other teachers but it's not until you leave the classroom that you're able to

influence a larger group ... to really [be] able to make change not just in your classroom, but in the larger learning environment. Stepping out of the classroom and being a coordinator allowed me to influence more teachers, and really see the impact that collaboration and focusing on instructional practice and student work had on teaching and learning.

Berta noted that she discovered two different ways to acquire a mentor in an administrative position: "you either seek them out, or they are individuals who see the caliber of work that you produce and therefore will offer to support you." She described that she has "been fortunate enough to have both aspects." Berta emphasized that as a woman you had to be mindful of how the administrative system worked. She believed that you had to "work twice as hard really to demonstrate that you have the ability and capacity to excel. You have to let your work speak for you." She stated that it was more difficult for women to seek out mentors because there are fewer females in a position to mentor administration. Not only that, but male mentors "might not necessarily understand your perspective or your reality in trying to navigate the system and really aspire to grow as a professional." Therefore, she advised that women be "very mindful and very intentional as to who you are engaging with. In addition, she believed that her experience was very different from most, and "it's not always understood by all individuals that are in power." Although there were some men of color in administration, she reported that "predominately it's still white men." As a Latina woman, she has had "to learn how to navigate between [her] culture being Latina and Mexican descent first-generation Spanish-speaking--making sure that I've connected and been able to work within my cultural environment and community--but also learn how to navigate in the

dominant culture, the white English-speaking male-dominated environment”

Berta experienced challenges and barriers as an elementary school principal in received mentoring context. When she was first assigned to an elementary school as a principal, her team of teachers was not open to receiving feedback or direction from her. She attributed the teachers’ uncooperative behaviors to three judgmental perspectives: “First, I was young; second, I was Latina; and third, what did I know in comparison to them?” Her mentor at the time was Latino and the superintendent, and he encouraged her to “continue moving forward with having high execution.” Then the superintendent changed to a white man, who believed she “just didn’t know what [she] was doing” and expected that she would have a hard time because “his assumption was you are not a superstar.” For Berta, the point was “they’re not going to understand my experience...the institutional racism and the teachers’ lack of cultural proficiency will lead to the assumption that the individual who is different from them and [doesn't] mirror them just might not know [how to be an effective leader].”

Berta experienced challenges as she worked her way through administrative positions. She was 32 years old when she received her first principalship, which she acknowledged might have contributed to her staff’s reluctance to see her as a competent leader. The first group she worked with also said that “all [she] cared about [were her] clothes, the way [she] looked, and that the children were scared of [her].” But when she worked at her second principalship, she received no pushback from teachers – now, parents were the challenge, specifically male parents who had a difficult time taking direction from her.

Berta elaborated that her work at that school was not appreciated until after she left

the district. She shared, "[My supervisor] underestimated my work and was not necessarily very supportive, but, after the fact, after I left that district, he reached out later on to tell me that I had done amazing work and he had not realized the kind of work I was doing at that particular school." She went on to express her disappointment of being misjudged, "which is very disconcerting. It's very unfortunate that [supervisors] are not able to realize the kind of work that individuals are doing to serve the community until they're gone." Eventually, even the male parents who had been difficult reached out and said "I'm sorry for not realizing the kind of work that you were doing."

Besides the superintendents she has worked under, Berta's most important mentors have been her mother and father:

They were the ones who guided me and supported me. Not that they knew how the system worked, but, whatever I was interested in, they would always try and support me as best as possible. If I wanted to take singing lessons, my mom would [tell me to] 'research it and find out where...to go...we will figure out how to help you get singing lessons'. If I wanted to play an instrument she would say, 'research it and let me know what we need to do and we will go wherever we need to go'. So they have always been my rock and my support system, so family has always been really important to me.

Berta's parents were immigrants from Mexico, and their priorities were working to meet their and their family's needs. Her mother went through sixth grade in school and her father finished high school before they moved to the United States. She stressed that,

They didn't go to school—not because they didn't want to... [but] there were other needs that they needed to take care [of]. ...They didn't have an education in the

formal sense, but they are kind and respectful individuals. ...You don't need to go to school in order to be educated and to be knowledgeable and to be able to support and guide the people you care about.

Both of her parents were labor workers, and Berta believed they had “a very strong work ethic—being able to know what a dollar’s worth and be savvy with how you are managing your life” She remembered working with her parents in grape fields when she was ten, and her first official job was working in the watermelons.

Her mother especially has been her personal and professional mentor for life. Berta valued her opinions, because “even though she might not have a doctorate, she ...very keenly... [is] seeing things and analyzing things and [bringing a] perspective to things.”

Berta has also received support from her mentor, a retired superintendent who first hired her as an assistant principal in Los Angeles County and later promoted her to her first principalship. She sought out his professional guidance, advice, and support as she pursued her long-term goal to become a superintendent. He supported her by,

being an ear, being a soundboard, letting [me] know what place would be the right fit for me because it's about fit...about being right for the community, but also the community being right for me...We want to be able to be successful as individuals, but also be successful within the community that we’re serving

Berta received support from colleagues who experienced similar situations or day-to-day challenges as she had. These colleagues, usually female Latina counterparts, helped her to “know that you’re not alone.” When she had no one with similar experiences to talk to, she would wonder if “maybe you’re the only one seeing it. So you being to question whether or not what you’re seeing is a reality.” She explained that “It's good to have a

sounding board and other individuals and other Latinas who can relate to you...who can guide you and encourage you to not let the system bring you down not let those micro aggressions to undermine your work and to weaken you.” She noted that one day she, too, will be a mentor to aspiring female Latina leaders, giving “support and assistance to someone like [her] who’s coming up the ranks.”

For Berta, the importance of mentoring other female, Latina leaders lies with the challenges women face when acquiring a mentor. First of all, Berta explained that male leaders have created a different network that many women are unfamiliar with: “you go to these large conferences and there's golfing...mentorship is happening in the golf course. You're making those connections in the golf course and that is not necessarily my cup of tea.” But another challenge is that “sometimes individuals might not be open and willing to mentor you.” Berta experienced this kind of rejection:

This year was the first time I actually had someone tell me that they were not interested in mentoring me, which I understand. It's fine, but to have your superintendent tell you that he's heard that you are an aspiring superintendent...[but that] he is not interested in mentoring middle management or directors because he's only interested in his work to be superintendent. This doesn't quite sit well. In the same sentence he said, ‘So I know that you’re aspiring to be a superintendent. I’ve heard that you are the caliber to be a superintendent’...In the next breath he says, ‘but I’m not going to mentor you because I'm only going to be mentoring future superintendents.’ So it’s challenging to hear that from your supervisor, from the leader of your organization.

She stressed that when she faced this rejection, she had to “cultivate those relationships

that [she] established and seek out other mentorships, other individuals who would be willing to support [her].” But she acknowledged that it was hard to find mentors in leadership positions who were easily available.

Leadership role. When asked how her sensitivity to others affects her leadership role, she responded, “It impacts my role every day. I think I have to be very cognizant about how others are going to perceive what I say or don't say and how that's going to be interpreted in relationship to my leadership practice.” Berta provided an example involving English Language Development (ELD) secondary teachers and professional learning opportunities that would support English Learners (ELs) in the classroom:

I had engaged in conversations with [the ELD secondary teachers] about the direction we were going in and why and how their participation was really important and instrumental in us moving the needle forward in providing ELs with high-quality instruction and [their] response was, ‘You know, well, other people need it, we don’t. I developed a plan, presented it and moved forward... [ELD secondary teachers] said they weren’t going to do it. I explained to them [that] we engaged in this conversation, we had discussed this, we talked about the why. The [ELD secondary teachers] said, ‘no we don’t need it’. So instead of being able to say no this is the direction we are going [in]...we had to take a step back...We haven't been able to move forward because the scope of teachers were not willing to engage in this process

But the challenge for Berta was much more than just the lack of support from the ELD teachers -- it was also the accusation that she was not sensitive to the ELD secondary teachers’ input: “If I would have said, "No we need to move forward," then it

would've been here's the evidence of me not listening. So I listened, but they still didn't like the results. ...Just because I listened to your input, doesn't necessarily mean we won't be going in that direction."

Berta shared another example of how sensitivity provides an insight on implicit bias with respect to gender. When she was a 35-year-old principal in a Northern California School District, a male Latino parent would disrupt the classroom that his child attended. He would walk in at any time and sit with his child and coddle the child. She met with the male Latino parent on many occasions to explain the school site visitation policy. She explained that the school policy was based on the Board policy, which was based on California Education Codes. The Latino parent ignored the parameters that Berta requested he should adhere to. Finally, Berta invited the male Latino Assistant Superintendent to join her meeting with the male Latino parent. She prepared a formal written letter explaining step-by-step the procedures the male Latino parent needed to follow, otherwise, he [male Latino parent] would not be allowed to enter the campus. The male Latino parent was receptive to the male Latino Assistant Superintendent, even though he said the same things that Berta had said to the parent. Berta concluded that the male Latino parent had:

difficulty with taking direction from a woman, there's no other way around it. I try to analyze it and look at it in every possible perspective. I tried to see if I was...not clear or could I have presented it in a different way...considering that I met with him multiple times—It wasn't just one, two, or three times. It was multiple times—and each time, I tried. Each time that I met with him I tried to present it in a slightly different way to make a connection with him to be able to engage him. He was not

interested...it was not until my male supervisor engaged in the same conversation.

[Then] he was willing to be open and to hear what he [male Latino Assistant Superintendent] had to say.

But it is not just men who dismissed her because she was female. In her current placement as the director of English Learners, she met with a husband and wife, parents of a child at an elementary school, and her direct supervisor, the Assistance Superintendent of Elementary who was male Latino. Both parents were lawyers and Latino as well. As they were talking about language access for the child, the Assistant Superintendent would defer to Berta, since it was her area of expertise and purview as the Director of EL. But the mother, a female Latina lawyer, would ignore Berta and go back to the male Latino Assistant Superintendent. Berta reported that the mother's "only exchange to me was she didn't know anything about me and that she liked my [fashion] style, but at the same time, [she] would not allow me to explain or to articulate what we were doing." Berta attributed these issues around gender and culture within her own community to generational disseminations and differences.

Despite these challenges, Berta's leadership role has been cemented in her from a young age. As the oldest of three children, the expectation was always that she be responsible and be the leader. As a second grader, she took care of her younger siblings -- feeding her breakfast, dressing her for school, and walking her to and from school. She shared:

But that's part of being the oldest is that having to lead by example. You had to set the example. You had to do the right thing. It didn't matter if you wanted to do the right thing or not, it was your responsibility...I was the oldest. So it's like you want

to help. You want to support your family and be helpful. You don't want to make things more difficult for them [parents]. So that's always been a part of what I do.

Female/male leadership. Berta believed there was a difference between the performance of daily tasks for female and male California K-12 public education administrators... If a male administrator was direct and to the point, the perception was that the male administrator means business and one needed to adhere to his directive. If a female administrator was direct and to the point, the perception was that the female administrator was aggressive, inflexible, and not willing to work with others. As a result, Berta said that female leaders must find a different way than their male colleagues to do their daily tasks:

You have to figure out a way to get to get your work completed [according to] your vision and [have] your vision realized... You have to find a way to make it a reality... It could be very straightforward with a male, [but for] a woman you have to figure out another way of being able to bring people along in order to engage in that process

Berta shared that a woman's style of leadership also needs to be different from a man's style in order to be promoted to higher positions. Woman leaders need to be able to assess the situation, listen to different perspectives, and bring people along in order to make changes in the organization: "we have to take into account the needs of the group in order to adjust our leadership style to make things happen, which ultimately result in, I believe, a very fruitful product because you're actually moving everyone along within the process." The challenge with this is that you "have to make adjustments—constantly—to how you are delivering your style or delivering your message based on your audience and

based on what you want to achieve.” Berta believed women were able to multitask and perceive things differently from their male colleagues, which could be a strength. .

Berta reported that there was also a difference between Latina leaders and non-Latina leaders with respect to recruiting others to follow them and adhere to their vision. She has experienced that “the women of color were willing to move with [her], move forward. It was the white women that had a huge difficulty.” The white women she worked with “were not open to or willing to take direction” from her. One example of this was her struggle with the ELD secondary teachers discussed earlier, who were predominantly white women. But she has had other experiences with this as well, which all have a common theme. Berta was a young Latina female leader. The White women had difficulty listening to and following her. Berta’s predecessors were White female leaders whom the White women spoke highly of. But despite these challenges, Berta focused on the reason it was important for her to continue to move forward as a leader. She stated, “We need to develop our practice [leadership style] in order to better serve our EL students, which are primarily Latino.”

She saw similarities in the challenges male leaders of color faced as well “because of the issue of race and ethnicity.” But Berta did believe that fact that they were male made for a different experience compared to being female in a leadership role “because, at least, they are still part of the dominant culture that you see in education and that you see in these leadership roles.” Berta shared that as a female leader, she has to work twice or three times as hard as her male colleagues to make sure her completed work was of the highest caliber. It was more important that she completed her work in a timely manner,

which meant she worked longer than her required contracted workday to complete her assigned tasks... She commented,

Are we getting \$.60 to the dollar when we're doing the same amount of work or even more? We have to work twice as hard to even be considered for the same position. I think we have to continue to push ourselves and do better in order to be considered equal or even close to it.

Support in the home was an example Berta gave of a difference between male and female experiences. Although she was single at the time of the interview, and said that "the only support I get is myself," she shared the experience of watching her mother work as a child:

She got up early, went to work, came home, and [continued] to [work]... it doesn't stop. Not only was she a provider, she was also a mother. She was also a wife I don't know how she found the hours in her day to do it, but I think the expectation is that she just had to do it. When my father would come home, he got to sit down and rest... she had to, also, be the house cleaner. She is the keeper of the house. There are a lot of layers. We are so multifaceted and sometimes it's so unappreciated the level of work that we do... We just do it [which] is taken for granted. We don't think about [it]. You just do it. You're just expected [to do it]."

Teamwork. Berta believed that a leader should know the strengths of the team members and how to group them together. She indicated that women are more collaborative, open to work together, and willing to exchange ideas. She explained that women must be able to share ideas and learn from team members through the collaborative process. She stated, "If you're not able to do that then they...can see you as

inflexible and not willing to work together." She contrasted this with how men work in a team," willing to just do it and move forward and implement something because that's the way it needs to be done." The challenge for women was that quick implementation is often more accepted.

Berta explained that trust is the foundation of a relationship. In order to accomplish the work or goal, members in a group must be willing to give and receive trust. She reflected on her challenging experience with the small group of White women who would not engage with her:, "I know [in a] one-to-one setting they were more open, more willing, but as soon as they got together they fed off of each other and were not willing to engage in the process." When asked how to build trust, Berta shared:

as a leader, you have to make yourself accessible even if they continue to undermine you and question you...As a woman, you have to take the high road and you have to continue to be mindful and intentional in your interactions and work really hard in not taking things personally because ultimately their actions and their behavior is not about you. It's about them and whatever challenges they are facing. So how do I build trust? By making time, by listening, by sharing the why behind my decision, by making it about students and by being consistent with my actions and with my behaviors.

Goals and challenges. Berta's goal was to become a superintendent. Her current challenges are within her district, such as the opportunity for advancement and her direct supervisors. The district is small. The possibility of positions becoming vacant within the next school year is slim. Her direct supervisors "might have a certain vision of who they want in a position that she may very well not mirror...The person that they see as an

assistant superintendent might not be a Latina who is bilingual.” But Berta focused on breaking these barriers by “looking beyond what is here and find the right fit.” She was open to relocating, which she stated she has to be in order to meet her goal.

When asked how women administrators might encounter challenges, Berta reiterated the struggle for women of networking in a male-dominated field. She said, “If you have cultivated a relationship through a mentorship process, then you’re going to hear about different opportunities more readily. [You] are going to be encouraged and invited to participate [in these opportunities]. [Whereas], if you haven’t been able to develop those networks, then you might not hear about them.” She added that “we, as women, might be very mindful and want to master a certain skill or some area before moving into the next space, a male might just want to take it on. It doesn’t matter if they [males] are prepared, or if they [males] have the prior experiences to facilitate and support the next step as an assistant superintendent.”

Berta also addressed challenges as a female Latina Leader, which have been within the [Latino] community. There were some Latino parents who undermined the work that supported students by alleging the site committees do not receive support from her and questioning whether she was monitoring site work in the area of parent engagement. They also alleged that she was not supporting the reclassification of EL students. These parents’ perception of advocacy for families had blinded them from seeing the systems and structures that were put in place and the systems and structures being developed by the parent committees. Berta commented, “...a lot of this has come about as a result of their own conflict of interest around being advocates for our families, but also having some financial gain from providing trainings to parents.” Berta expressed

the challenges are the undermining, untruths, backbiting, negative comments, and the false pretense of support from “the very people you serve...my community...people like me”. She stated that the difficulty was “not only do you face it [challenge] from the dominant White culture, you also face it from your community [Latino]. So you’re literally in the middle. I’ve talked about navigating both systems and that’s what it is and sometimes you don’t fit in either one”.

Berta added that as a female Latina leader, she was conscientious of how she addressed any challenges. She managed her emotions by remaining calm so she could be mindful of what she was doing and ensure that she would not make rash decisions. She avoided being reactive to any situation that was presented to her to avoid the perception that she was too emotional and could not do her work. She indicated that her calmness could be perceived as a lack of care. To avoid such perceptions, Berta shared,

At the end of the day, it’s one or the other. So I try and just think about how the other person is feeling, try to listen to them, try to come to some sort of resolution together, and try to be as consistent as possible with my responses. I try to be methodical about how I do things. I try thinking about all possible scenarios and having a ‘Plan A, Plan B, Plan C’ that way, if something doesn’t go well I’ve thought about all the possible pitfalls. Although it’s kind of challenging at times to do that—you fail to think about them [possibilities], but I think I address challenges just as possibilities. What are the possibilities within this challenge?

...What can I learn from it?...How can I do better?

She identified herself as a thinker who processes information and listens without reacting. She stated, “...in order to achieve your goal, you don’t have to be direct, aggressive,

argumentative. You don't have to be that, but even if I [were] direct it wouldn't be perceived as direct. It would be perceived as she's argumentative.” To combat this perception, she continues to be thoughtful and calm, listening and conveying her message, which is her way of being assertive, direct, and firm.

Latina leaders. Berta believed that Latinas are systematically excluded from leadership positions in the California K-12 public schools. She faults the public school system for not realizing the exclusion is happening, and compared the number of female Latina superintendents to the number of female Latinas who have Doctorate degrees. Both have few numbers of female Latinas. Then she asks,

Are we systematically denying Latino students access to higher education? The system might say that it's not, but I think differently. We just might not be comfortable having those conversations around it, because it talks about race and gender and the glass ceiling. I think it's very similar to what we're doing to our Latino students and to our EL students. As Latinas we are not less capable than white males just like our Latino students are not less capable than white students, but how is the system supporting or creating barriers to limit that movement?

Berta has been treated differently because of who she is, female Latina, for her whole life. She stated that, “I don't look Mexican, but then again what does Mexican look like? Or people saying you speak Spanish? How do you speak Spanish? Aren't you Asian? I feel that even when I try to just not [to] look for it, it comes to me.” Berta was often mistaken for being Asian, which she thought had colored her entire experience, because when people found out she was Mexican, they would say, “Wow, I didn't know that! You speak English really well!” When they assumed she was Asian, no one

commented on her linguistic abilities. Growing up, her elementary teachers knew that she was Latina. Her primary language is Spanish and she was in a bilingual education program. It was in Junior High School and High School teachers who assumed that she was Asian. The secondary teachers' expectations were that she would do well in school, do more work, and earn the As.

Berta was not aware of any ethnically oriented bias that had prevented her from obtaining positions of authority. She said that, "Every position that I apply to I've been granted, but that doesn't mean that I haven't been passed up." Berta acknowledged that becoming disgruntled would not be in her best benefit. She took a more positive approach, stating that "I need to learn to work within the system in order to achieve my goals". She was sensitive to how the system works for certain individuals, and knew that "I need to work with individuals that are where I want to be...learn from them...really be aware of where I'm supported and where I'm not."

Networks and wrap-up. To build and utilize her network, Berta connected with educational organizations such as the California Association of Latino superintendent administrators or CALSA; California Association of Bilingual Educators or CABE; and the University Southern California or USC Trojan network. She networked with Latina superintendents and keeps current on the latest research in education.

Berta shared what have been her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership administrative work. Her major satisfaction was "working with colleagues who are committed to the same vision and goals around student learning and engaging families, being able to support our students and support our families and to do that in a team of like-minded individuals who are committed to that has been a satisfaction for

me.” Her major dissatisfaction is the entrenched institutional racism in the school system,” and how individuals are willing to compromise in order to keep the status quo. How individuals are willing to look the other way and not do the right thing when they perceive that they will not benefit politically...knowing that there's expectations for some, but not for all and that not all individuals are held accountable and are held to the same expectation.” The reason this made her so dissatisfied was because ultimately, “it trickles down to our students.”

Keeping these factors in mind, Berta searched for districts that interested her when seeking an administrative position. She preferred to serve students that are underrepresented, students who mirror her -- Latino students, English Learners or EL, students of color. She believed “every single student has the capability to achieve... but they haven't been given the opportunities by which to do it.” She searches for districts that are progressive, “that are willing to push the boundary and that are not sitting on the status quo, who are at the cutting edge of student learning and who want to make a difference.”

Caridad

Caridad’s pseudonym means “love and generosity.”

Background and mentoring. Caridad was in her twelfth year of administration at the time of her interview. She was a researcher for many years in the field of education, with an emphasis in higher education. Her current position in a pre-K thru 12th district was the Coordinator of public private partnership, where her role was to engage the community, as well as private donors, in order to supplement programming for students and families that the district serves. Although her title was Coordinator, she was

receiving the salary of a Director. She indicated that her title should be Director, but feels this was unfair. She had a Doctorate in Philosophy in Educational Psychology and was aware that her education and life experience was more than other directors at the district level.

Caridad grew up in inner city Los Angeles. The basis of her personal motivation was from her experience growing up in poverty – it was a goal of hers to “move [her] family out of generational poverty.” But she also desired to support other children, especially those with a socioeconomic disadvantage. For this purpose, Caridad sought a leadership position to make a difference for students and their families, “especially families of Latino descent just like [her] own.” A large part of that goal was the “assurance that in our [educational] system, that there was a voice from, not only a Latina, but also from someone who grew up in poverty and understood the importance of supports for children.”

She said she would like to prevent bullying through her leadership, but especially the kind of bullying Latino students experience:

I was bullied because I was poor and I wore the same clothes often. I was bullied because in junior high I didn't have any cool clothes. My mom made my clothes...I was wearing dresses that were really more appropriate for a young girl in fourth grade than a girl in eighth grade, but that's all we had. I was bullied because my shoes were old or because I only had three pair of shoes. And then I was bullied because I was a nerd. I was very nerdy because I carried all my books. And so [now] I still feel like I'm being bullied because I'm too nice and people take advantage of that...

Her bullying experiences have provided her with the skill to recognize it when it is happening to others. This recognition allows her to mentor young Latino leaders to become more resilient, to strategically distance themselves from such behavior and to respond without jeopardizing their own safety.

Caridad obtained mentors in high school, college, and graduate school. All of these mentors helped her move forward with her education, whether through filling out college applications or sharing similar experiences. Her mentors had similar backgrounds to her, and went through “the same process” in the educational arena. Her mentor in graduate school, a professor and advisor, helped her “get through a really difficult stage in [her] life as far as dealing with politics and grad school because [she] was Latina, because [she] was female, because of [her] ethnicity.”

She also had mentors outside of the education system, such as her paternal grandmother. Her grandparents were “born and raised in Pueblo in Jalisco, Mexico,” but her paternal grandmother was the only one who came to live in the US, at the age of 65. Caridad described her as “somebody who was just very caring and very wise. Someone who, even though she grew up in a pueblo in Mexico,...is very open-minded—even more so than her own children.” Her paternal grandmother lived to be 104 years old, and passed away four years ago. Caridad experienced racism growing up through her parents’ experiences. When her parents bought their first home, they found that “whomever it was that was selling the home did not want to sell the home to [her] parents because they were Mexican.” The community at that time was “a lot of white veterans” who were “very against Mexicans moving in to [their community].” Other than this example, Caridad said that her other experiences occurred outside her community. She

witnessed the racism against her parents partially because her parents did not speak English and they relied on her and her siblings to translate for them: “that’s how, of course, you as a child come to know what’s being told to them because you’re translating it”.

All throughout her life, Caridad has been supported by her parents and family. Her high school was majority Latino, so the first place where she personally experienced racism was in college, where now she was in the minority. When working on her BA at UCLA, she found support elsewhere: “it was really a group of other Latino students from inner city Los Angeles who were really there for each other. We helped each other get through school. I don’t remember having any white friends. It was mostly the Latino kids.” Caridad witnessed and experienced the racism of opportunity in college as well, where “the white students were given opportunities to work on grants or research studies [whereas]...the Latinas were not.” She felt that the white male professors in particular treated the Latinas differently, saying that “the tone that they used with us was different than the tone that they used with the white students.” Perhaps most shocking to Caridad was the fact that this racism “was very obvious” but was “accepted” at the same time.

In graduate school she had a similar experience, except she and her fellow Latinas felt even more in the minority. To combat this, she reported, “we started a group ‘The Latinas at USC Grad School of Education’. We started a group called the ‘comadres’. And we still get together...it was because we felt isolated.” At the time, Caridad reported that Latinos were an incredibly small group in her program, and there were very few Latinas. So her group met for dinner once a month and talked about “growing up in a Latino house and the traditional family all the way to the politics [they] were

experiencing as Latinas in higher education.” These meetings helped her feel as though she was not alone in her experiences:

It did become a place where you just felt that others understood what you were going through; that you aren’t making it up [and] that yes there is the racism that we were experiencing. And so really it was a place where you could just express yourself and also a place where those of us that were younger and new to the program were being mentored by the older Latinas who were closer to finishing the program and anywhere from which Professor not to take, which class to take, or how to go through the dissertation process as well as just knowing that you weren’t alone because it was a very lonely place. .

Caridad still saw these feelings of isolation in the K-12 system she works in. She reported that, “I do see it here locally, given the classism; I do see our kids, especially in secondary, experiencing it. For her own part, Caridad said, “I still find myself looking to other Latinas for comfort; looking to other Latinas for understanding, perhaps validation. I feel like when I went to grad school, it was practice for understanding what I’m going through [or] experiencing in this town personally and what the children that I serve through my work are experiencing.” ..

Caridad believed that it was easier for a male leader to acquire a mentor as opposed to a female leader, especially if the female leader was looking for a male mentor. If a woman was seeking a female mentor, that was easier, but “it seems like it's not as difficult for a male to seek a male mentor.” In her own experience with male mentors, she “had to establish that relationship and show [her] worth for them to be there for [her].” But for her mentors that were female, “it's been more of a personal relationship as

well a little bit more layers than with [her] male mentors.” She also experienced that it was “easier for someone who is white to acquire a mentor than someone who is Latina.” Both of these difficulties were exacerbated by what she called “the good old boys club.” She clarified: “It is something that exists, but I find that mostly in an institution as opposed to in the barrio or in the community, whereas the men tend to really be there for each other as opposed to the men in leadership positions being there for women.”

Leadership role. Caridad believed that sensitivity to others: made her a more effective leader. She described herself as “a very patient person,” and “someone who very much supports others.” She said that she “sees the struggles that our young Latinos are going through,” and that she understands that these struggles are “not because they are not capable [or] not smart, but just because of the influence of the environment.” Her leadership role as she saw it is to be or encourage “that extra support to be able to rise to the occasion.” The young Latinos she sees in her district are also growing up in poverty, even if within a different geographical context than she grew up in. For Caridad, this meant that, “I understand their story and I understand what type of trajectory they could be on to better their life. And sometimes it just takes one to two people to make sure that they make it.”

Female/male leadership. Caridad was unsure if male and female leaders performed their daily tasks differently in California K-12 public education. Based on her personal experiences and what she has witnessed, she believed that “women have to prove themselves and men don’t... ..It just seems like men can get away with doing less of a close to perfect job and women have to do a perfect job.” She expanded on this, saying that “in order to be accepted in leadership roles, [women] need to be more

conservative in their approach than a male does.” This included not being “loud” or “as opinioned or bossy than the male.” Acting the same as male leaders would lead to being stereotyped “instead of having it perceived as from a point of strength, it's perceived as a weakness.”

She reported that this makes team work difficult as well, since women feel like “they have to be more reserved.” Caridad explained that, “they have to really think about what they’re going to contribute before they contribute. Do I really say what I want to say? Or do I keep it to myself and just wait to see where this goes?”

When asked to share how she thinks male leaders experience the same challenges as female leaders, Caridad stated,

It depends on their situation. If they have a family, I’ll use the example of colleagues who are women and have a family; they do not go home and sit on the couch. They go home and they cook...they clean and they put their children to sleep...my male friends, who have a family, usually don't go home and do what my women colleagues just did...but it doesn’t seem that they have as many responsibilities in the home as the woman does.

Caridad indicates that it is more accepting to have a male leader:

I think having a male leader unfortunately is more accepting than having a female as a leader. It even goes back to what we have just experienced as far as electing a new president for the nation, whereas, you know folks didn’t want to vote for Trump; but they also didn’t want to vote for a woman. So they ended up voting for Trump. Even though they didn’t really want him as President...they did not want a woman as leader.

Caridad commented that she thinks if a male leader gives instruction or a directive to a team, the team will be more receptive to follow those instructions as opposed to a female leader's instruction or directive. She shared,

I think it's more challenging. I think that you know it's not always accepted. I think that in most circumstances there will be a question of 'why' that directive was given and if it was given by a woman as oppose to a man.

Caridad shared that she doesn't think that the skill of a woman differs from a man's. She said, "No, I don't. I just think that societal norms are that you know men know more than women." She commented,

I think we have to be strategic and I think that's why it's so exhausting because we always have to be so strategic. We can't just say what's on our mind. We have to think twice about whether we do communicate that.

Caridad indicated that a woman differs from a man in terms of working in teams. She said that women must be more strategic. She gave an example of how a woman differs from a man in terms of working:

I think it goes back to being strategic about what kind recommendations you're going to give in that team because when there's teamwork...there will be some unpleasant moments where someone will not agree...that's part of working in a team is coming up with the best recommendations, the best scenario, or [the] best outcomes...I think that's when it comes back to being strategic about your contribution and how you will articulate that contribution of recommendations so that you're not [seen] as being opinionated.

Caridad comments on whether it is a given that there is going to be trust automatically

with the man as oppose to the woman:

I think it just goes back to socialization and that...men are not seen as emotional as women and that women will make decisions based on emotions...men...will make decisions based on knowledge and that goes back to just society in the way society has been... It goes back to if you think a woman is going to make a decision based on emotions, folks will tend to not trust that because it's not based on knowledge or logic.

Goals and challenges. Caridad has many goals, as well as challenges in the way of achieving those goals. One goal was to change the generational poverty of first generation immigrant students by changing their trajectory to live a better life. Her initiatives and project goals were to prepare them in high school to enter college and attain a degree. She indicated that the challenges are the adults in the K-12 system who do not understand the barriers of poverty that the first generation immigrant student experiences. These adults do not perceive the immigrant student to have the cognitive ability to be successful in college.

Caridad commented that a challenge female Latina administrators might encounter was from White non-Latino males in the K-12 public school system. She had observed how the White non-Latino males treat their White non-Latino female colleagues with respect, but she was not treated with the same respect. She believed that White non-Latino males who lacked respect for her thought she did not have the depth of knowledge that they did. They did not trust her to share their true feelings with respect to work related projects. Hence, they would not collaborate with her. Instead, they excluded her from conversations they had with others. Caridad was very strategic in responding to

such disrespectful behavior. She said, “I do not respond the way that I would actually want to respond. I respond in a very calm professional manner with facts as if I am in a courtroom or in a deposition”.

Caridad viewed her responsibilities to her family as sometimes in conflict with her work. She stated, “My work is taking me away from having a family of my own because of the demands”. She indicated that she feels she must work much more to prove herself or keep her job. Caridad had high work ethics as a result of being raised in poverty. She had the mindset to overcome poverty, and now wanted to prove she had the skill set and ability to perform her job. As a female Latina, she felt she had to work twice as hard to prove she was smarter and could be trusted to do the job. She commented, “I think that another way to put it is it's feeling like the Latina can't go home at 5 o'clock, but the White female can. That's one way to put it and I feel strongly about that”.

When asked whether she has had ethnically oriented interactions that she perceived as barriers to reaching her professional and personal goals, she shared that although she has not yet started a family, she has reached her professional goals. She indicated that there have been many challenges. Most of the challenges were the result of prejudice and racism against her, a female Latina. Caridad shared an example:

So what I've shared is that I have experienced that myself...I was in situation at a college where I was the only person of color and everyone else was white. And I tried to be just very professional, very serious in my work and I was. I was talked about as being just like my colleague, being that she looks angry. She looks too serious. She thinks that she's better than us. She thinks she's better because she doesn't joke around. She doesn't want to go out to happy hour with us. And so I

learned a lot from that experience. I was also always bullied. They talked about me, but yet I really focused on work...so on my next job, I decided, 'Ok I'm just going to be myself'...and so my personal self is very joyful, giving, very gregarious personality. And so when I did [this] in my next job...I was underestimated because I was always that happy person...who invited people to lunch and always gave out gifts and was always happy and always said good morning to everyone...I feel...who can I be where I'm not going to be criticized?... as I got older, I realized...I'm just going to be who I'm going to be because that's who I am.

Caridad focused on the children and the families she was helping. For her, these were the individuals she had to prove herself to. She shared the process to come to this realization was difficult and took time. She shared that it continued to be difficult because others continue to underestimate her because she was always happy.

Latina leaders. Caridad stated that during the last six years in her career, she noted that men were promoted sooner than women, especially women of color. She noted that most recently in her career, she has observed men with no experience in leadership and lacked knowledge of a leadership position were promoted over women, who were more qualified, to a high position at the central office.

Caridad shared a professionally related interaction that made her feel she was being excluded or treated differently as a result of her ethnicity:

I would say that's an everyday interaction...in a group setting...it was a discussion and several of us were going to make comments...some of our White colleagues, both male and female...made their comments and I was about to make my comment...I was told by the White male that they were done and I said, 'Well, I

had something to say also' and they [said] 'Oh no we don't need any more comments, we're done'. So that was kind of what I would describe as an everyday interaction that could happen and it has happened before within the workday.

Caridad shared an ethnically oriented bias that prevented her from obtaining a position of authority in an educational institution. During her graduate studies at a private university located in southern California, two professors received a five-year federal grant to study Latino immigrant families who resided in a low-income community located in southern California. The White non-Latino professors selected White non-Latino researchers to do the study. Soon the professors realized that the four researchers could not speak fluent Spanish. The professors realized that the research would be limited in collecting data from the Spanish-speaking participants as a result of the language and culture barriers. The professors recruited two Latinas in the doctoral program, one of whom was Caridad. In the end, the final four researchers were the two Latinas from the doctoral program and two White non-Latino researchers who spoke some Spanish. Caridad and the other Latina researcher realized they had been selected because the professors needed their skill set to relate to the participants and speak Spanish. They felt angry, but they understood the importance to collect the data. They would generate millions of dollars in resources for this impoverished Latino community. Caridad and the other Latina researcher collected the data, but were not treated as equal to the two White non-Latino researchers. The researchers held the same graduate status as Caridad and the other Latina researcher held. Caridad shared that the Latina researchers collected the data from the Latino families. They were excluded in many ways, but included as a result of language and cultural barriers that created limitations in completing the

research.

Networks and wrap-up. The networks Caridad has established in her career were those that would assist her in bringing more resources to serve children and families. These were her social capital networks that assist her in doing her work. Her personal networks were Latinas who provide emotional support.

When asked what have been her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in her leadership administrative work, Caridad responded that her dissatisfaction in doing her work as a leader was racism. She shared her satisfaction was observing the impact of her work in changing the lives of children growing up in poverty in a positive way:

I was just having this conversation...yesterday with a young Latina who is doing great work and I know that if she keeps staying focused and resilient that she will continue to do amazing work...the conversation was around her wanting to quit what she was doing because of the politics...around the work that she was doing...her question was, 'Why can't I just do the work? Why do I have to experience the racism because I am Latina doing work for Latino kids? And why do I have to experience these politics where some people don't want to support me because I'm doing work for Latino kids? So it's difficult because in those moments where I am ready to just throw in the towel, I end up getting a phone call from my mother who just randomly says, 'I wanted to call you to thank you because without your work we couldn't do what we do' or when kids are telling me how they can't wait to go to college and they're getting ready to go to college or getting the help that they need so it's like this balance'.

Caridad shares that that there was a different outcome if Latino students don't have

Latino leaders or teachers working with them. She stated:

White teachers don't understand the circumstances that our Latino students are being raised in because they are being raised in poverty and so we have unfortunately too many situations where White teachers do not believe that Latino students are capable of completing...an advanced placement class or an honors class, which will ensure that they have access to college...they feel so confident about that, that they will tell that to the student...they will say that out loud. And so a lot of times it's your own prejudice...it's also understanding those circumstances of poverty, whereas, how are the students living? Are they sleeping in the living room or the dining room? Are they taking the bus to school? Are they working? A lot of our Latino seniors have a job. They usually work at night. They usually are getting off work at 8:00 or 9:00...they also work weekends...they have to do homework and are up till 1 o'clock in the morning...then they're sleep deprived and they have the responsibility of making sure that pay check makes it home...they...use that money to contribute to the family.

Delina

Delina's pseudonym means "graceful and noble."

Background and mentoring. Delina was in her 14th year of administration at the time of the interview. She was an elected official at the time, and had also served as a school board member and an educational administrator in higher education. Her path to administration began with her childhood experiences:

I don't think that I initially had the intention of being in leadership roles as much as it was advised that the work that I was doing with students, with parents, with

community members around educational issues lends itself to finding a way to get some things done by being in leadership. So I think that leadership was the means to get to the outcomes that I was looking for, for students, educational programming, and the community.

Delina explains that there was a particular group of students that she felt that didn't have easy access to the education system:

I'm first in my family to go to college. I'm also the daughter of immigrants...my parents came from Mexico, two different states. And my dad is a room service waiter and my mom is an administrative assistant for a higher education institution. Neither of them has completed high school. When they came to this country...they actually completed their GED together...through the adult GED program but they did not complete a higher degree than that. I was an English learner as well. So I think that knowing that statistically that is what we call the underrepresented group, meaning that we have a lower than average college going rates...our financial gains averages is lower, health care access and health overall is lower. So I feel like with those definitions I was in a position to be more open and understanding to working with underrepresented student populations.

However, I also feel that a lot of the work I've done has really been across the board for all students but also have knowing that...my own personal story, my own personal background, allowed me to better understand how to help underrepresented students that traditionally have lower than average rates for a lot of major areas: education, employment, health and so on.

Delina stated the reason she chose the leadership path was to benefit students:

I chose to pursue a leadership path to benefit students was really because it probably touches on a personal background. On the fact that education was a big and major game changer for me and for my family; so therefore, I've always put a lot of value in education and decided to pursue a career working as an educator, as an educational administrator because it was a career that fulfilled me in supporting the values that I feel are important for students to be able to get a degree, earned a job, and be successful in their career.

On acquiring mentors, Delina believed that there were a few ways to make that happen. The first option was to “actively pursue them.” But the second option was that they might “just fall into place. They’re the people that you have repeatedly gone to, to seek advice, and then you realize after some time, ‘Gosh, they really are mentoring me.’” She stated that these mentors were found subconsciously by looking for the behaviors, styles and skills the mentee wanted to duplicate. But they might also be “those people we connect with, that we tend to go to seek advice to help us personally, professionally, and in other areas.” Delina shared that her second grade and sixth grade teachers really supported her. During junior high and high school, she received support from some individuals, but she didn’t “always have continuous contact.”

Delina shared that some members of her family were mentors. She stated:

I learned a lot from my parents. Even though they didn’t go to college, I learned a lot about some fundamental skills that I still feel have helped me be successful now. Such as being responsible, time management, commitment to values, not giving up, perseverance, you know. I think that those are some of the areas that I feel like I learned from my family. I did have some aunts and uncles who went to

college, even though my parents didn't go to college. And I definitely looked towards them to get some guidance academically, that's for sure.

Delina shared her perspective on how a woman leader acquires a mentor as opposed to a male leader. She stated that there were fewer women in leadership positions; therefore, it was not as common to find women in the education arena. She believed women might have been able to acquire mentors in similar ways to men, but having access to mentors would not be the same as for men. She shared:

So I think that that sometimes it instills a question for young women [such as], 'Oh are there people like me, that look like me, doing some of this work?' And 'Do I see them in these positions?' So I think that that is the first element that's different. I also think that I've definitely had men mentor me in my life, but I also understand that there are elements of our lives that might be similar but elements that might be different and so that's just something that at least for me I've considered in the mentoring that even when they're been men who have mentored me I understand that they don't completely understand, they haven't walked my path, they don't know what it's like to be the only one women, the only woman of color in a room. Sometimes comments that are made they hear them in the same way that I might hear them. So I think that that changes how we think of mentorship a little bit.

Delina shared her perception of why there are fewer women in the leadership role. She indicated that history has shown "women were not given the same rights as men in this country and other countries." She stated:

In some ways, women have been catching up. I also think that there is definitely gender roles at play that women have been seen as being individuals who have had to focus on...raising a family and so forth. So, there is added responsibility, I think, for women and so those are some of the elements that contribute to why we don't see as many women in office. I think that there are different expectations as well and that sometimes...is challenging.

Delina stated that female Latinas were “a double minority”. She commented:

There are really not a lot of women of color in leadership positions. So I think we almost have to be twice as good, we almost have to be better spoken, better educated, better versed, in order for us to be seen on par with some of our male colleagues.

Delina shared an example of what women experience every day:

And you see this manifests itself in everyday experiences. When you walk into a meeting, when you propose the same idea and it's not heard, but then it's picked up by a man who heard it twice because it was said by a woman, and there's research to back this up. I know that our last president's female administration talked about this about how they were very strategic in saying that we need to repeat what we hear come out of the mouth of a woman because so often it is overlooked. But the other side of it is that so often it's what we implemented and I think that that's true...I am someone who looks a certain way, is a certain stature. And I feel like that plays into it, that people don't know what to make of someone who looks like me, who's in a position of leadership because there haven't been a whole lot. So they're trying to identify, ‘Oh is this the token

Latina? Do we just smile and say, 'Yes, that's great?' Or 'You know what you did this person really have more to offer?'" So I think that that's part of it.

Delina defines "token Latina" as "someone who is there to satisfy a greater interest that some may have, but not always there with the full authority or power that that person should have." She explained:

So, sometimes it's really just the idea of we want to check off a box and make sure we have a Latina or Latino there and somehow that person will speak for the masses and somehow that person will satisfy our lack of expertise in a culture, in a community, in a generation, in a gender. I think that that's where it becomes problematic because there really is no one person that can satisfy or can be the voice for a generation, for a race, for a gender, and so forth.

Delina provided an example of the stereotype and insensitivity that she has experienced from others once they noted her gender and ethnicity:

When I'm at a meeting and someone shows up and I'm the only woman...they will say, 'Come sit with all the big boys!' Well I'm not a boy and I'm sitting there. They overlook that we are assuming that really that one Latina there is somehow not being taken into consideration. I feel like this happens to me often, in every position of leadership, where people are visibly surprised that I am the person that is in the position that has the leadership title. And so, very often, they think of me and they treat me as I am something else that I am not...I think of my first time that I got elected to office. How everybody was convinced that I was the staff member there ready to take notes at meetings...I was certainly ready to take notes, but I was there taking notes as the elected official...There's been times

where I've been referred to as the fiery Latina...I don't think people who have said it are really thinking about the stereotypical implications that are involved with comments like that, and why passion, drive, and initiative translates into the word 'fiery'.

Delina stated women share similar experiences of “being the only woman in the room independent of race or age.” She stated, “I don’t assume that every woman shares my experience or I don’t assume that every Latina shares my experience, but there’s definitely, I think, some shared experiences that we all have and then there [are] some experiences that are really more unique to us.”

Delina shared how she acquires assistance from others. She had her own criteria of selecting individuals who were in the position to provide advice and guidance. She sought assistance and support from men and women that she had “established a trusting relationship with.” These individuals shared the same “values” and had her “best interest in mind when advising her”. She indicated that “mentorship...comes in all different shapes and sizes at different points in our lives, and we have to be open to it coming in different shapes and sizes at different points in our lives, and I think that that's how I've sought advice.”

Delina explained her strategy in determining when she needed to seek assistance to move ideas, projects, and initiatives forward. She sought others who had the confidence to take on the project. She shared:

There [are] several examples that I thought about, where serving especially in the educational world and talking about sensitive issues like how do we help underrepresented students and English language learners. It was just so important

that I was not, as the Latina, the only voice saying here's the techniques, the skills, the programming, that need to move forward in order to help these communities. It was really important for other people to vocalize and say, 'That is true, we support this work'...there [are] times where you're like, 'Ok, I can't be the first one to talk. Someone else has to say [it] first'. There [are] times where you say, 'I need your help. I need to come in and publicly voice your agreement'. There [are] times where there's disagreement and so I have to do pre-meetings before the issue raises and goes to a vote, and so forth. I think that's what part of how we learn that things need to get done and you are often times looking for allies on the issues that are of importance and allies again who share values about how to move forward.

Leadership role. Delina believed her sensitivity to others affected her leadership role. She shared:

I think that the longer I serve in a leadership position, I think I've become more aware of the need to listen and be thoughtful about where people are coming from and I would say that's how I define sensitivity. Even using the word sensitivity, I stopped for a second because do I, as a woman, want to associate myself with the word sensitive; because there's a stigma there and so I stopped, I reflected, and I said, 'You know what? Let's think of this as an awareness issue'. And this question and example alone reflects what is in the minds of those of us that have to do this work.

Delina's childhood experiences affected her leadership role as well. She accepted

responsibilities at a very young age. She was the first grandchild and she would care for her younger cousins. She guided and played with them. She commented, “When you're the eldest you care you think of people you lead and you support people and have some of those skills translated into who I am now I think so.” Her childhood experience prepared her for her leadership role. As a result, “I was the first to get a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and be elected to public office.”

Female/male leadership. Delina believed there was a difference in how men and women perform their daily tasks. She stated that women multitasked better than men, and women were more detail-minded. She shares, “We constantly know what it's like to say we are leaders in multiple spaces of our lives.”

The leadership styles of men and women also differ, according to Delina... Delina believed some women in leadership positions have learned to “model male characteristics and behaviors of leadership”. She indicated there were more women in leadership roles now, who come into the space and say:

Perhaps we don't have to wear a pantsuit and tie all the time. Perhaps that you know it's not just about interrupting; It’s not just about speaking firmly [and] looking someone in the eye; Perhaps, it's really the content of what we’re saying and, in addition, to all of these elements that help us be leaders, perhaps not listening is much more core to what leadership is or can be for some individuals.

Delina did not think that male leaders experienced the same challenges as female leaders. Historically women leaders have experienced challenges of being paid unequally to their male colleagues. For this reason laws exist in order to prevent discriminatory

practices against women. She reported that regardless of those laws, such practices continued to occur.

Delina shared her thoughts on whether it is easier for women or men to work in teams. She stated:

I think that working in teams can be different for all individuals and I think that if the team is made up of people who share the exact [and] same identical experience, it may be easier for some people to work better in that team. and so when we look at those teams and we look at the fact that if we believe that there are mostly male leaders, then it's very likely that the teams are going to be made up of males.

In her opinion, women understood the importance of working with other people whether it be face-to-face or over the phone. Women work in teams to “find a way of doing something better, a way of achieving a goal, a way of getting an answer to a question”.

Delina shared her thoughts on whether it was more likely that a woman differed from a man in terms of working in teams. She believed that:

Women can differ from men working in teams...I think it really depends on the team makeup. And the reason that the team makeup matters is because something was said around trust. And I think sometimes people have an easier time trusting people who share similar experiences, who look like them, who act like them in ways that other times other people don't.

Goals and challenges. Delina’s goals focused on her goals for the students themselves. She would like students to master educational and professional skills. She would like students to be successful after leaving the K-12 public school system. She

would like students to have the opportunity to attend college have careers. She shares, “I do want students to feel that the experiences they have in the K-12 educational setting are served in some way as a foundation for them to achieve their jobs, their professional, their personal goals”. Delina stated:

I think particularly in California it's a very diverse state. Latinos are a growing population and in years to come they will be the majority in the state. And I think that's the reason that it's important to have leadership that reflects the community...because when leaders reflect the community we serve, they're able to draw on similar or like experiences to help folks be successful and to really come up with ideas and solutions to troubleshoot some of our historical challenges. I think when you have a diverse leadership body you also are able to think of the issues and reframe on the concept. You are able to look for things that perhaps others have not looked for.

When the leader mirrors the community, the powerful message was “you can do it! You can work hard and achieve this!” She believed “their voices aren't heard and their histories aren't told that their experiences aren't valued”. She stated that for “moral good” and “economic progress” the education system in California should provide the skills needed for people “to see themselves in” positions or jobs. She shared:

We need the people and the education system of California to understand who the consumers are, who the clients are, who the leaders are, who the drivers are, who the purchasers are; and I think that the more this becomes or is a diverse state, the more that's really going to require leadership to be reflective of the voices, experiences, the challenges, that concerns, the ideologies of a very diverse state

Delina saw many challenges that women administrators may encounter – not only challenges she herself had encountered, but ones that others she worked with had faced. She indicated:

For one, there are not as many women administrators. So when we talk about the importance of experiences, voices, ideologies, backgrounds, ideas, it can vary.

And when...we don't have as many women administrators, it's not reflective of the reality of California. We know right now in 2017 that we have more women in the state of California than we do men. And so not having women in these positions also means that there [are] certain things that are perhaps being overlooked or not being addressed.

Delina shared other challenges that women may encounter.

I definitely think that there could be challenges in the daily experiences of Latina or women administrators. I think I described in a prior question that one of my challenges is people really understanding that I'm a decision-maker and not just someone who is there to take notes...I think that there's [a] perception [that] we don't have as many women in educational administrator roles in this State; so therefore, to break through to be heard, to be seen, to really have the opportunity to be that vehicle to get to the end goals for our students is going to be harder for women who have not typically been seen as the catalyst to get us to the educational goals that were trying to get to.

Delina shared that a challenge for a woman was proving she is capable of doing the work or job:

When we have a group of individuals who are the majority of the state, but are not reflected in leadership in multiple sectors; it becomes a challenge to justify why we should be there while, for example, some men don't have to justify. It's just assumed we know you're here because of your experiences. Sometimes I feel women have to prove themselves more that they had these experiences; even if for the mere fact that sometimes you find yourself in spaces where you're repeating what your experiences are, just in case people question your validity [and] the strength of your comment in a particular way.

Delina addressed challenges by first understanding that there would always be challenges. She would analyze the context of the situation in order to determine the skills needed to address a particular challenge. She would identify what she or others did well and what she or others did not do well. She stated:

I think that that is one thing that comes with experience that we don't get it right the first time, we don't automatically, you know, understand or get through the right or particular issue; but with time and...this particular leadership experience, we get better at it.

Delina felt her responsibilities to her family conflicted with her work. She felt a "sense of guilt at times". She desired to accomplish a lot professionally, but family was most important to her. She stated, "I sometimes feel that my family sacrifices the most because leadership requires time and so I think that it definitely conflicts at moments and with who I am with what I want to do." The guilt was difficult for her to address:

I think my family is extremely supportive and they understanding...what I do. And the importance of what I do and having that voice, so I received lots of

support, but it's hard because the responsibility of being there for family doesn't go away. Whether it's children or whether I think it's aging parents or extended families, there's so much that comes with it and being the eldest in the family. I feel like I've been taking care of people for a long time. I care, I want to know what's happening whether it's a family member asking me to help them with a legal document, like I don't want them to not have that resource, and so how to be everything that I have been for my family and still be in a leadership position that requires that I travel and that requires a lot of hours can be very difficult at times. And I would say how I feel and the guilt of doing it is one of the hardest things that I have to deal with.

Delina felt that her ethnically orientated interactions have been barriers in reaching her professional personal goals. She felt as though there were constantly barriers and challenges in her job. But she always considered, in every response she gave to a colleague or parent or student, how her race, age, gender, and class intersected with who she was. Delina questioned whether the challenges were influenced by her being a woman or by her being a professional Latina. She stated:

There [are] times where they just all intersect and we're double minorities and triple minorities at times depending on the spaces that we travel. So I do think that there [are] times where that intersection of really yes being underrepresented, but being even more like underrepresented is sometimes harder to do. I think even on the generational front...definitely there are individuals who don't understand how your experiences have position

Delina stated that she always has to establish credibility in order to prove she can do the elected office position:

I have to prove that I wasn't. I have to prove that there is substance behind this, that I'm not just a token, that I'm not just there and I really draw on my education on my work with the community to combat some of those challenges, but they exist. People aren't used to seeing someone like me in office, seeing someone like me in a leadership role. And so I have to remind them in, of course, the most polite way possible that there is a space for me and my experiences; and that independent of what you know or what age they may think I am or not that the experiences I have are really what...I need to be in this position.

Latina leaders. Delina shared her belief on whether Latinas were systematically excluded from positions of authority from within California K-12 public school systems. She indicated that public education had systems that prevented female Latina students from preparing to become leaders. Female Latinas in education should be encouraged to become leaders and praised for their leadership skills. She commented, “Are we identifying the ways that they can get there? Are we being strategic and thoughtful and actually asking them so that we have more women who are interested? So I think that there are several things that can be done.”

Delina described professionally related interactions that she experienced which made her feel that she was being excluded or treated differently as a result of her ethnicity. As an educational leader, she proposed changes that benefit all students. She stated, “There have been individuals who have said, You only care about Latinos. That's

the only thing you care about.” There were those who perceived Delina’s ethnicity as influencing her decision or “the only thing she sees and hears and feels.” She shared:

I feel like I’ve been treated differently, and particularly if you are part of a body of leadership that is different. And when you see that because you are a Latina, certain comments are only going to you, but, yet, everybody voted the same way. Independent of their gender or ethnicity, you realize like, ‘Wait, what my only difference between me and this person is ethnicity. We actually all voted the same way and so I think that we see that.

Delina believed she had been the victim of ethnically oriented bias that prevented her from obtaining positions of authority in California K-12 public school system. She explained that “the fact is that we almost expect the bias to come and prepare for it and say, ‘Ok, we’re ready to go.’” She commented that she was blessed for the experiences. She stated:

I’ve been given the experiences but my concern, so often, comes with people who don’t have the skills and resources to provide evidence to counter some of that bias. And I see that a lot for our students where I’m like I have an education about this experience give it to me, talk to me...don’t let our students feel some of this, because they yet haven’t been given that evidence, [the] experience that they need to fight back on some of this bias.

Networks and wrap-up. Delina had networks which she sought to build and utilize. She sought various networks to assist her in supporting others. The type of networks she sought were professional networks, collegial networks, and networks of people who shared her values and ideas. She stated that she doesn’t work alone, but she

has always worked with others or networks of allies to assist her in successfully supporting others. Delina commented, “I feel that it’s those networks and those allies, as we call them, that I’ve needed. I don’t think that I am in this position of leadership alone, by working by myself. I think that...I got here because of so many people I work with.” She tried to establish networks for people. She shared, “in my mind everything I do is with the hope that there is a collective benefit to what I’m doing that people are benefiting by the programs by the ideas and initiatives that I’m moving forward.”

Delina shared her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership administrative work. Her satisfactions were:

...those limited and sometimes isolated moments of seeing that we’re moving in the right direction despite obstacles or history...and I have personally learned to really value them for what they’re worth. To allow them to have the strength to give me, a strength that they should; because the work we do is difficult. The work we do requires a lot of patience. It requires a lot of working with people to help change the educational system, to help our students. If it [were] easy, we wouldn’t be working on this for decades and centuries. And so I draw on those limited moments of progress and change of good where I’m like, ‘Wow, we did something’.

But she has also had dissatisfactions. She gave an example of English Language Learners that had been in a program more than five years. Although 50% were reclassified, there were 50% that were not reclassified. She commented,

I also look at it as one of my dissatisfactions of, ‘Wow, we still have half way to go, right?’ So I think, at times, you look at the cup half-full and, at times, you

look at the cup half empty but both of them drive. You know that you need to look at the glass half-full when you need the energy that momentum to move forward...there's times where you have to look at it like, 'Hey, we still have work to do and we can't give up' and you can't be content because we're not done yet; because there's still students that we're trying to help and serve.

Delina concluded:

I think that I want to reiterate how...as a woman of color, as a woman whose generation is not reflected a lot in the voices of leadership, how it is difficult to only speak about one of those items, you know they intersect in my life almost every day and I can't sometimes separate them. And I think that's another dynamic to this work that we will see more of because we will see more ethnic diversity, generational diversity, more gender diversity in so many spaces. And that's what we're working towards and I think that also creates a unique perspective, where at times, you are able to really grasp the concept and ideas and say, 'Here's what it was'. And then, at times, it's a little deeper. A little bit more confusing than that because there is this intersection between all of these things of who we are, we are so much more than just one dimensional. And yeah I want to add that because I think that sometimes reflected in both my confidence and assertive answers to some of the questions, but also my hesitancy to just put in one box.

Elisabete

Elisabete's pseudonym means "promise of God."

Background and mentoring. Elisabete was in her 15th year of administration at the time of this study. During her career, she has served in many capacities. She began as an instructional aide, then moved on to be a classroom teacher, a resource teacher, a multilingual program director. From there, she became a vice principal and then a principal. She has earned her Masters in education.

Elaborating on her background prior to going into administration, Elisabete said that teaching was a calling, not a job. She said that it was,

a way to serve and so as a classroom teacher I sometimes...get a little bit frustrated with the administrators that I had...I [needed] to do something about it. And so what attracted me to administration was the possibility of positively influencing or impacting more students than those that were just in my classroom.

When she became an administrator, Elisabete stayed at the elementary level, because that was where she “had the most expertise and knowledge.”

She was a migrant farm-working child, and attended six or seven schools. She never felt that she was a part of the schools she attended. She felt academically behind, and said, “I didn’t understand what was going on.” She remembered that it was very challenging in high school. Her parents bought a house and stopped moving around. The demographics of the high school were one-third Latino students and almost two thirds were White non-Latino students. There was also a small Asian student population. She grew up in a very sheltered home where her friends did not visit and she did not visit her friends either. Her step-father was an alcoholic; therefore, she and her siblings lived in isolation. She was taught to not to share information about herself, hence, her interactions were minimal. She stated,

My first white friend I had was in in sixth grade and then...not until maybe I was in high school and those were not as close friendships with them until I was in college. So I did initially feel awkward around White people because I was not exposed and I did not interact much as a child with people who were not like me. and a lot of it I think also has to do with my parents beliefs and upbringing that in their words “they're different you stay with your own kind, don't mix” so that was a challenge and so in terms of becoming a Latina principal of White teachers was not easy. That was quite a challenge because I think for them as well as for me to have a leader of color was not the standard. It wasn't what was common. And so I did find that on different levels, often times I would either get questioned or challenged or not taken seriously...I found that I, often times, had to assert myself or that I had to just really be very straightforward about things, it hasn't been an easy road.

Elisabete shared her profound journey on how she acquired the consciousness of her being a Latina and having to work that much harder or above and beyond in order to be able to be competitive and retain her administrative position:

I think it's been a life-long process, but I shared with you that at one time I was embarrassed of my Mother...now I hold her in such high regard because of the gutsy lady she was and the example she showed and the incredible obstacles that she overcame. Those were the seeds to empowering me as a women that my mother came [to be]...she was able to come illegally to this country as an eighteen-year old and open the world...do all these things on her own really gave me a lot of sense of empowerment, but the other piece, too, was I think my

college education, you know, [was] breaking away from home. I want to say something just very quickly. I left home totally against my parents will. They did not want me to go to college. I'm the first in my family to go. I took a very bad beating when I [left] ... I applied to colleges unbeknownst to my Mother. I forged her signature. I had a special mentor who he was not a regular college counselor, but he came in through a program called Upward Bound at our high school...he looked at records and stuff and he noticed that I had straight A's...he asked, 'Has anyone talked to you about college?' And I said, 'No, no one has talked to me about college.' And he said, 'Well you need to apply. You got to do this and you got to do that.' You know he kind of got me into doing that. And at first, I was a little hesitant. And he said, 'No you can do it. You got the grades.' And I had been on CSF for four years or whatever because I loved school and I did well academically. So anyway, I got all these applications out. I was accepted and when I got my first letter of acceptance—I was actually accepted to four different colleges—and when I got them, I showed my Mom and she goes, 'you're not going to go to any college. You can't do this.' And so very reluctantly I wrote back and said thank you very much, but I'm not going to go to college. And when I sent those letters off, I felt as if I had thrown my life away. I thought this is it. I'm going to be picking oranges for the rest of my life, you know, it's over. So after that I was very lucky. One of the schools sent back a letter saying, 'Can you please reconsider, we still have your spot' and I was being offered a full scholarship, a full ride...my parents working in the field didn't have the money to send me, and I thought, 'How can I let this go?' So, I wrote back and said, 'Ok,

yes I accept' and that was even before I told my Mom. That day, I remember. I got a box because you know we didn't have suitcases. So I got a box and I started to put my clothes in there. My mom comes in and she says 'What are you doing?' And in the calmest way, like it was the most natural thing, I said, 'Oh, I'm going to college.' And she says, 'YOU'RE WHAT? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GO ANYWHERE. YOU CAN'T DO THAT!' and I said 'Well yeah, I am.' I didn't know how I was going to get there and I didn't know how it was going to happen. And she starts beating me and then she goes to my step-father—and I told you he was an alcoholic and he beat me a lot—and so I thought, 'Ok, here's the end of it. He's going to beat me too, and I'm still going to try. I'm still going to put stuff in my box and see what happens, but what he did was the most astounding thing, actually, he took the belt from her and he told her, 'If she can open her doors, we're not going to close them.' And I thought, 'Oh my God, I couldn't believe it at first. I thought, 'Well he just wants me out, which is fine. I don't care, whatever. Who cares what the motive, it's a great decision.' So that's how I ended up in college.

Elisabete attended college in 1973 to 1979. She shared that she focused and dedicated herself to successfully complete this opportunity to earn a college degree. She learned as much as she could about the world. She was empowered by the Chicano movement. She joined different groups and organizations. She joined a dance group of Ballet Folklórico. She shared:

We really learned a lot about our roots and our identity... there's a Chinese quote about 'he who has more responsibility has more

responsibility to give'...the more I better myself, the more I can give to others...I think that whole process is what awakened that awareness or consciousness. And...so that was like the beginning steps of moving on and then, of course, as I went in from a classroom teacher and so on and so forth, I felt that I could do more and I could do other things and so that's how I went into Administration and having the mentorship, that kind of support.

Elisabete's mother was her mentor through the example of service to others. Her mother cooked for the sick and cared for other people's children. Her mother spoke highly of Elisabete to others. She commented,

Her strength and her wisdom as a Mother and her devotion in keeping the family unit strong and us working together and being caring brother and sisters was definitely a mentorship. Also learning how to work in teams. There are 10 of us [siblings]. It's not easy getting along. If you come from a family of 10, you better know how to get along with other people; otherwise you're not going to survive. So when you talk about team work to me, [regarding] the sibling relationships...she made us work out our problems and she would not allow us to fight; Which to this day, I'm ever so grateful for, because I see other people whose families have fallen apart...there are sibling rivalries. You know that kind of thing. Had it not been for my mother's conviction of keeping us together and bringing to the forefront the importance of working together and working out our problems, I don't know that I could do the job that I am doing.

Elisabete shared that she is fourth from the eldest. Her older siblings worked in the fields and she was designated to take care of her younger siblings. Her responsibility was to cook and cared for them. This was where she learned to be a leader. She stated that her two younger sisters attended a junior college, but her children and the next generation attended college. A couple of them have their doctorates degree.

When discussing how a leader acquires a mentor, Elisabete mentioned that sometimes “mentors just present themselves without you really knowing.” She gave this example from her own experiences:

I didn't initially think that I wanted to be a principal until a Superintendent pulled me aside and said, ‘have you ever considered going into administration?’ And it's not something I have to say I really thought about. I thought about it afterward, after he shared that with me, but not only was he a mentor...he also provided support along the way, to make sure that I was successful. For instance, instead of going directly into a principalship, he is the one that advised, ‘You really should try being a vice principal first’. [He] gave me the opportunity of being a vice principal at actually two separate schools. so I was able to see how two separate principles worked under their guidance.

Elisabete shared that sometimes mentors seek mentees. For her, mentors have sought her throughout her career. She indicated that she has had opportunities to seek mentors. When she was a principal, a professor was mentoring teachers at her school site. She asked the professor if she could attend some of the classes to understand what was being taught. The professor began mentoring Elisabete. It was a mutual understanding. A district provided another mentor where she served as a principal. The mentor assisted

Elisabete with some tough situations. Elisabete stated, ‘So I think one can either seek mentors or mentors sometimes seek you and sometimes it's a mutual understanding’.

Elisabete indicated that her three mentors consisted of a male Latino superintendent, a male White non-Latino vice principal, and a female White non-Latino administrator. When asked how a female leader acquires a mentor as opposed to a male leader, Elisabete was unable to provide a response. She reverted to her experience with her colleagues. She stated:

Both male and female, we both seek each other's expertise, opinions, advice, knowledge whatever it is...I get that both from male and female colleagues. So I'm not sure that being a female means it's a different way. I do know maybe because I'm so immersed in it and conditioned that I personally am open to mentorship and seek that...I know that I can always improve and God knows there's always places to do better and learn from other people.

When asked if she observed whether male leaders were mentored differently from female leaders, Elisabete stated, “I have seen that where male leaders are groomed for you know the next position up. I've seen that happen much more often for male than for female without a doubt.” But Elisabete did share how she acquired assistance from her colleagues. They provide guidance, ideas, and advice among each other.

Leadership role. Elisabete shared how her sensitivity to others affected her leadership role. She indicated that “being a leader of color does heighten our awareness or level of sensitivity to others of different backgrounds and different cultures.” She stated:

Yes, I think much more innately and a lot of it is just because of how we grow up ourselves...everywhere we go, anywhere we go, we're brown and that's just the way it is...I don't know how it's like to be anything else, but [at the] same time it's something that that comes to play and we wear [our color] for better or for worse in every situation.

Elisabete believed that there needed to be sensitivity when communicating to others, when considering cultural backgrounds, when understanding personalities, and when interfacing with different people. She stated, "It's a tremendous dynamic. We all bring different things to the table and just try to work through those is difficult".

Elisabete explained that she was sensitive to children who were transient. When parents shared their reasons to relocate as a result of an eviction, no resident vacancies, two or more families come together to rent a residence, she understood. She encouraged families to persevere while she sought support for them:

I also understand my mother was very reluctant to come to school because she didn't speak English...she felt she wasn't on equal standing with the teachers and, as kids, we go through these different stages, but unfortunately I remember going through this terrible stage where I was embarrassed of my mom coming to school because she couldn't speak English and because her hands were stained from the fieldwork....I really work hard to make families feel welcome regardless of whatever the background or whatever their working situation or whatever the challenges that they're going through. I support them and we're going to do everything we can to make sure that their children get the kind of education that they deserve.

Elisabete explained that as a result of her migrant transiency during her elementary school years, she did not develop close friendships. She shared that there were times when she was not fully accepted by her peers. Some peers would tease her for wearing braids, for having pierced ears, and for wearing little earrings that looked like BBs. Her mother forced her to wear the BB earrings.

Elisabete recalled that her mother did not speak English. When she was in sixth grade, a new student from Mexico who did not speak English enrolled in her class. Elisabete befriended the student. She spoke to the new student in Spanish and the teacher slapped Elisabete for speaking Spanish. The teacher said, 'You will never speak that dirty language'. Elisabete associated the teacher's definition of the Spanish language to her mother's language as something shameful. She extended this feeling of shame to her mother. When Elisabete became a principal, her mother was proud of her and she would bring Elisabete lunch almost every day. During this time, Elisabete mended her relationship with her mother. She commented:

I don't think any child should feel embarrassed of who they are or the language they speak or be embarrassed of their parents. I think that's wrong and that was one of the things that drove me into education. And if there's one thing in the world that I want to do is right that wrong. The other thing is that I do try to speak Spanish to my children whenever I can so that they know that's a positive thing, that's a good thing...when I address the whole school in the morning assembly, I also try to provide the announcements in Spanish so that parents can hear...I remember when I first did that at the beginning, children would come to me and say, 'You speak Spanish? My Mom does too!'

Elisabete's childhood experiences have influenced her leadership role. She proudly speaks to children in Spanish and let them know, "how wonderful it is that they speak two languages too." She stated:

We have an opportunity to make an impact on a growing life and it's such a precious time in such a short amount of time that I would...want to do everything I can in my power to make it a positive and a great learning experience for children...childhood is such a formative and powerful time in a human being's life.

Female/male leadership. Elisabete believed that women and male California K-12 administrators performed their daily tasks differently as a result of their gender and the perceptions of women constituents. She shared:

Male leaders are treated differently than female leaders and I know it's not just my imagination because I've seen that. White leaders are treated very differently from Latino or black or leaders of color. And White women are treated differently from Latino [leaders] or leaders [who are] women of color, yes. Our society is so engraved

She continued on with the following example. When Elisabete was a first year principal, she was interviewing applicants for a classified position. One applicant displayed disrespect toward Elisabete once she introduced herself. The applicant burst into laughter and said, "Ha, you can't be the principal! Oh no! Oh come on! "After the interview, panel members were shocked with the applicant's behavior. One panel member commented, "I've been in numerous interviews with different principals and I have never ever witnessed such as disrespectful behavior!" Some panel members shared

with her that they felt the applicant's behavior was "the most racist thing" they witnessed. Elisabete stated, "I wish I was making this up, but you know how many White principals are going to be faced with that? I don't think too many."

Elisabete shared her thoughts regarding whether a woman's style of leadership differs from a man's style of leadership. She believes there is a difference between women and men when it comes to leadership style. She referred to the differences in the upbringings of children of different genders. They were conditioned differently. The expectations were different for girls and boys. Girls were expected to behave differently than boys. As a result, the conditioning and expectations of how men and women should behave were different. She shared,

I've worked with many different male leaders and yes...I think that women for the most part and I know it's a generalization and it's not true of every situation...women...tend to be a little bit more nurturing and perhaps try to look at things in different ways. Not to say that there aren't men that are nurturing or that...there are women that are not, but in terms of leadership styles yes I would say that there are differences.

Elisabete shared her thoughts on how men and women are perceived when they are direct. In general terms, she stated that the perception of men who were direct and straightforward was accepted, whereas, when women were direct and straightforward, it was not acceptable. She stated, "It can and it has been interpreted as she's a 'the B word' and it's not always taken in the same way as it is for a man. There's definitely a double standard, no questions."

Elisabete commented on her thoughts on male leaders' experiencing the same challenges as female leaders. She shared that male leaders have obstacles to overcome. She gave an example of male leaders who are tall and large in stature. These men must tone down their approach in order not to be perceived as intimidating. This can be a challenge for men of large stature. She stated, "I'm sure there are different kinds of barriers that face male leaders that we as female leaders may have an easier [time with]". She shared another example pertaining to her bilingual skills. She indicated it is easier for her to communicate to the Latino parents in Spanish, whereas, it would not be easy for a male monolingual leader or a male non-Latino leader.

Elisabete commented on whether male leaders experienced the same challenges as female leaders where it pertained to family. She shared that home support was critical for leaders as they pursued their careers. She stated that she was:

very blessed to have had a very understanding and very sympathetic spouse who took on a lot of the domestic roles and responsibilities, which had he not done that then I don't think I could have been able to pursue my career as much or be as effective as a leader without that kind of support because that home support is critical.

The support a leader received at home would depend on the spouse and whether there was an understanding of expectations between spouses.

Elisabete shared her thoughts on women and men working in teams. She stated, "I think it depends again on the individuals. There are men who naturally work well with others." She made reference to opportunities to collaborate as a child and how these opportunities conditioned a child to be a leader who can work in a team. According to

Elisabete, playing sports or having siblings to play with provided opportunities to acquire the skill to work in teams. She stated, “I’ve experienced people who are team players both male and female or not.”

However, Elisabete stated that it was easier for women to collaborate, to think of others, and to work in teams. Her reason again was that it was the result of their upbringing. She commented, “I think perhaps the way we you know in our upbringing women are conditioned to work in teams”. Elisabete shared:

With any team, there are different roles to be played. And in fact, I’ve seen it happen where we divide up in different groups, even as adults, where sometimes a male will take the more vocal role of being the reporter, being the operative, and, you know, as women we say, ‘Fine, you take it’. I’ve seen that happen...

Goals and challenges. Elisabete shared her goals in California K-12 public school’s education and what prevented her from being successful in meeting those goals. Elisabete strived to be the best that she could be and to help students reach grade level in academics. She desired to provide teachers and students the type of leadership she did not always have. She was satisfied being a principal and did not aspire to a higher administrative position. Regarding challenges, Elisabete perceived a challenge as an opportunity to improve or make things better.

Elisabete shared her view on her responsibilities to her family as they conflicted with her work. She shared:

I didn’t get into the administration program until my children were a little bit older. And I’ve already shared with you that my spouse was very supportive; So

whenever I've had to stay late at night or stay long hours that kind of thing, I have been very fortunate to be with a family who is very understanding.

Elisabete said she has had several ethnically oriented interactions that she perceived as barriers in reaching her professional and personal goals. One example of a challenge was the perception of others that Elisabete gave preference to Latinos. Some people believed that she only attracted Latino families and that she was racist against White people and also against Black people, but these assumptions were not based on any evidence. She commented, "Those are assumptions that people make just because of how I look and who I am that I'm going to favor and that I'm going to give preference to Latinos, that's been a challenge."

In another district, she spoke Spanish to students during an assembly to help them understand that their behavior was inappropriate. Staff at the school and a Board member felt this was unacceptable and they requested that the superintendent reprimand Elisabete at a board meeting. Elisabete shared her reflection:

Would that have happened to an administrator who was White? I can't help but ask myself, 'Would I have to be defending myself if I was White?' I used a teachable moment to...teach [students] a little empathy... that this...could be misconstrued and turned around. Was it because of my color and who I am?

Latina leaders. Elisabete shared her belief that Latinas are systematically excluded from positions of authority from within California K-12 public school systems. She stated that it was a challenge for Latinas seeking positions in any district. Unless the California district was sensitive to the needs of their Latino students, they recruit Latinas. She explained that Latinas had to prove they were "above and beyond not just once not

just twice but to get through the door.” Once a Latina was hired, she had to continue to prove to others that she was competent. She shared,

Oh, the other thing I get is ‘you speak English beautifully.’ Well what’s that supposed to mean? Why yes, thank you very much, I was born in this country. What do you say? Sometimes you feel like can you give me a break, honestly...people don’t even realize how they’re coming across. Yes, I’m a principle and I speak English beautifully or I write very well or, you know, I hope so, thank you very much.

Elisabete described professionally related interactions that she had and it made her feel she was being excluded or treated differently because of her ethnicity. She said that the district needed bilingual teachers, but there were no prospective applicants. She was asked to recruit in Spain, but there was an uprising from the teachers, especially the White non-Latino teachers. Elisabete stated, “It was like it wasn’t fair and it wasn’t right. They didn’t think that I should go and I should do it. I don’t know if I would have been told that if I were White, I wonder.”

Elisabete shared her belief whether she has been a victim of any ethically oriented bias that has prevented her from obtaining positions of authority in the California K-12 public school systems. She commented,

It’s a possibility. I’ve been in situations in the past where I’ve applied in different places and the doors have been closed. And I have felt that maybe I wasn’t the right color or the right gender. So yes, I have experienced that.

Elisabete has experienced interview panels that judged her from the beginning

and did not hear what she had to share. These panels went through the process as a courtesy. She shared, “It’s hard to explain, but you just know intuitively that you’re not who they’re looking for”

Networks and wrap-up: Elisabete shared the networks she sought to build and utilize. She stated:

I continue to build the networks with my colleges. I think that has been incredibly useful and personally fulfilling. Also, [I read] other blogs...ED week, and Teach Thought. And [I] try to participate in other, mostly electronic, venues of reaching out, but even just locally with other colleagues.

Elisabete shared her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership/administrative work. She described her satisfaction,

I think the greatest satisfaction is when a child comes up to you and says, ‘Mrs. Principal, you speak Spanish too?’ It fills your heart. Or there are days when I feel, ‘Damn, that was a good day. I was at the right place at the right time.’ I helped this child or I helped this family or, in this situation, I know I did the right thing. Whether its keeping a child from going off the wrong end or doing a discipline that I felt was more in tune with what the child did or a turning point for a child. Those things have been very rewarding when I feel that who I am has really made a positive impact on the children that I serve and on the families that I serve.

Elisabete described her dissatisfactions,

The most [dissatisfaction] is the politics. It’s just dealing with all the things and be everything for everyone, but not being able to do that. And there are teachers

who may not be happy with what you're doing because of this or that, and sometimes find ways to back stab you [in the back]...that's been really heart breaking...I feel like I have given my heart and soul and then to be trampled on. And then you feel like, 'Ugh, that's ok, I got to keep going. I got to pick myself up, and I can't take it personally. I have to keep doing what I'm doing. When we accept the role of leaders, we know, first of all, there's no union to protect us and, second of all, we know we've got to take the good with the bad. And sometimes we go through situations and sometimes we don't. I remember hearing a professor once saying, 'There's going to be causalities, just know going in its not always going to be hunky dory. And you're going to have rough times.' And I have certainly have experienced those.

Fairuza

Fairuza's pseudonym means "woman of triumph."

Background and mentoring. Fairuza had fourteen years of experience in administration at the time of this interview. She was a professor of sociology at a state university in California as well as a school board member for her local school district. At the university, she taught Chicano and Latino studies, the Sociology of Education, classes on families and also race relations. She said she taught classes that were related to stratification and social inequality.

Fairuza's path to administration began with her childhood experiences but continued into her own experiences as a parent. She observed how the ranchers treated her parents, who were farm workers. At a very young age, she would go to work with her parents on the weekends. Her parents and other farmworkers, who were Mexican, did not

have bathroom breaks and lunch breaks. There were no bathroom facilities and they needed to work nonstop. The ranchers treated her parents with disrespect, and treated their animals with more respect. Fairuza shared:

I can remember being very young and complaining to my parents ‘why do you let them treat you that way?’” Of course not knowing that if they did talk back that we would be out of a job, but, you know, I was growing up in a time when a lot of Latinos, Mexican immigrants, accepted that; but I just always felt that it was wrong. And so later on, as I grew up, you know, I knew that when I went out and started working I didn't want to have a job where people could yell at you and talk to you that way. So I think those were the early days when I started to form an idea that, you know, in order to be in a position where you could control your workplace environment, that it was necessary to go to school. It was necessary to be vocal and outspoken, but I knew also that you had to time it right because my parents needed the job. And so I think my leadership skills started forming even then in terms of observing what my parents had to go through...well I was born in 51’, so you know this was when I was about 10. And when I was 15, that was during the Chicano movement and civil rights movement. The farmworkers movement was also going on so that was the era when things were really changing pretty quickly.

As a parent, Fairuza shared the experiences that led her to her administrator position:

Well... I have three children...I had been living in my community for a number of years and my children were in high school...they [were] experiencing a variety of issues at the local school. And so the thing that really started me on the path to running for school board is when my daughter was 16 [years old]. She became

pregnant and the school had no support services for young women like her. As a matter of fact, when I went to talk to the teachers, they were very disrespectful and said it would be best if she just dropped out of school until she had her child. And it was at that point that I really started to realize that if I didn't become active in our school district, that it wasn't just my daughter that was being affected; but many other girls that were in the same position. So, I started to become very vocal. I started attending board meetings. I advocated for my daughter so that she was able to get all of her units to graduate successfully; but it was [a] really difficult process. And so once she graduated from high school, then I started thinking about running for the local school board and...that resulted in me running and getting elected.

Fairuza described how a leader acquires mentors throughout their career. She stated that most people do not expect women, including women who are educated, to be community leaders. The visible Latino community leaders tend to be male Latinos. As a result, most of the time, female Latina's mentors tend to be male Latinos. Fairuza sought male Latinos in leadership positions in her community to be her mentors. She asked the Latino leaders how they started on their paths to leadership positions. The male Latino leaders shared ideas with her and supported her. Also Fairuza sought women who were in high visible positions and women who were involved in their child's education. Fairuza stated:

So it was from the women that I spoke to and not just women who were in highly visible positions, but, for example, mothers that were part of school site council and also mothers that were a part of the bilingual education committees now known as the English Language Advisory Committee [ELAC] and District English Language

Advisory Committee [DELAC]...and I honestly learned quite a bit from those mothers because even though they didn't have a high level of education, they were very involved in their child's school. And I actually gained a lot of leadership skills from watching these women address the issues, and, even at times, directly confronting the principal or vice principle when their children weren't getting the education that they needed.

Fairuza sought out her mentors. She commented that although it is believed that women are capable of being leaders, they are not perceived to be as competent as men. She gave Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta as an example -- the male Latino leader (Chavez) received the notoriety even though the female Latina leader (Huerta) was just as important: "but she never received the same credit or even the same kinds of articles or books that have been published such as the ones they have done for Cesar Chavez even though she was a critical part of that movement." Fairuza knew that Dolores Huerta coined the term "Si se puede." For many years the term "Si se puede" has been attributed to Cesar Chavez. Dolores Huerta did the legwork while her male colleague received the notoriety of the Farm Workers Union movement. Fairuza stated, "I think it's the perception, not just from Anglo society, but also from within the Latino society that the leaders are supposed to be male and women are supposed to stay home and raise children." She shares that Delores Huerta was her mentor in a way:

Dolores Huerta...she was actually another role model, but, you know, not having access to her, I wasn't actually able to get any advice from her, but I did follow her closely in terms of at the different kinds of tasks that she was involved in during the farm workers movement. And I always had an admiration for her because of her

willingness to, you know, go and do the leg work while everybody else got all the glory and she didn't care as long as they were getting benefits for the farm workers.

Fairuza said that there is little research studies of female Latina leaders, but there are an abundance of books about male Latino Leaders. She stated:

Latina leaders are to be found in all communities. You don't have to find them in important roles such as being President or a superintendent of a University or school district. Latina leaders are among the mothers that go to school every day, that belong to the schools site counsel, that belong to some of the other parent organizations and are out there fighting the good fight, but for some reason we still haven't really acknowledged the important role that women play in the establishment of leadership roles, which is not a good thing because that means if it's not being written about then it doesn't exist.

Fairuza explained how she perceived a woman leader acquiring a mentor as opposed to a male leader. She stated that the expectation was for men to acquire leadership positions. The opportunities for men increase, which provided more access to leadership positions with respect to school districts and universities. The gender data showed that the majority of superintendents of districts and college presidents were White non-Latino males. She indicated that if there were people of color in these positions, they tended to be men rather than women. She shared that women of color who did attain a superintendent or college president position tended to be invisible. She commented that the perception held by society and the Latino community that women should work in positions that will not take them away from their family responsibilities was a barrier and prevented most women from attaining important leadership positions,

“whereas, men don’t have those obstacles that women have to deal with”.

Because of these expectations, Fairuza believed that women leaders would have to seek out their mentors as opposed to mentors seeking them:

Men still have the opportunity of having a lot of other male mentors...you don't have as many women in leadership positions that these women have to actively go out and seek in many cases. I know, as a woman, I always look to see if I could find female mentors, because women in leadership positions face different obstacles than male leaders. So we have to be more active because you're not going to find as many mentors as Latino men...most of the leadership positions are filled by men and by Latino men...Latina female mentors are more scarce and they are harder to find...you actually have to actively go out and seek them and men don't have to do that.

Fairuza acquired assistance from several people and groups.. She joined a political organization, Mexican-American Political Association [MAPA]. Initially, MAPA members consisted of men. She began to recruit women from the community who desired to address issues in the public school system. They were concerned that their English Language Learning children were not receiving the preparation to enter college. They were concerned with the college attainment rates. As the MAPA female membership increased, the opportunity for Fairuza to become a MAPA chair was possible. Fairuza commented, “MAPA chapter was probably something like 70% women and then the rest were men and the women were actually the leaders of the MAPA chapter”. She indicated that the outcome was there were other MAPA chapters that were started by women in her community.

Leadership role. Fairuza shared how her sensitivity to others affected her leadership role. She explains that her gender and ethnicity, Latina, and the ability to understand and relate to the Latino culture and family, helped her in the leadership role. She understood that most Latino fathers tended not to get involved because they have to work two or more jobs. It was the Latina mothers who were addressing the educational issues. Fairuza stated, “I think that being a Latina leader and working with other women with mothers from the community really improved my sensitivity”. She observed the mothers in action as they addressed educational issues with the school board and site administration. She said, “I learned as much as they learned from me...by observing and listening to them it helped shape my leadership skills in a lot of ways and vice versa”. She shared:

I think that...they would also learn a lot from me because I would often hear comments like ‘the information you’re giving me is helping me to see the bigger picture’ and a lot of times they said that they felt empowered. So, in a sense, my leadership skills were give-and-take and that I would give whatever knowledge I had that I have learned along the way... I think that women have a better capacity of being able to tell each other exactly what’s on their mind whereas men are more reluctant to really share what's going on and the women are willing to open up and talk about a lot of issues that I think men have a hard time talking about.

Fairuza expanded on how she acquired her sensitivity. She believed that males were raised to be private with their feelings, while females were not. Her mother raised Fairuza; she worked full time and cared for the family. Her mother had a third grade education in Mexico. Fairuza stated:

She came to the United States, she never went beyond that [third grade], but a lot of the success that she had was attributed to her hard work ethic, but she never had a formal education other than third-grade in Mexico... She worked as a farm worker for many years... there were other kinds of jobs that she had. One time it was seasonal work in...depending on what's growing or what agriculture is being grown during the year. She also worked in the date packing business and also picking grapes and you know whatever else was growing in the...valley. When we were younger, when they used to have cotton out in the...valley...she actually picked cotton as well. So whatever agricultural you know vegetables or fruits that were being grown during the season that's what she and my dad worked.

Fairuza's biological father was born in Mexico and attained a second or third grade education in Mexico. Her mother divorced her biological father and relocated to the United States to work in the agriculture business, picking vegetables and fruit. She worked as an undocumented immigrant. Her mother met her stepfather, who was born in the United States. They married and resided in a southern community located in California. Fairuza's step-father was more of a disciplinarian. He attained the eighth grade in the United States' public school system. She states,

He was also a farmworker for many years when we were growing up. And then, when we were older, I think I was about maybe 13 or 14, he was actually able to get a job at 'Kaiser Steel', at that time...he was out there for two years as well, but the bulk of the time that we were growing up, both he and my mom were farm workers. Fairuza shared that she learned her sensitivity from her mother, grandmother, and aunts. She commented:

Having that instinct or intuition or sensitivity, whatever you want to call it, I think has played a crucial role in the way I've been able to develop my leadership skills. And also how I've applied them to improve the quality of life for my community.

Fairuza indicated that there must be trust in the workplace. The leaders must have trust amongst each other. The staff that is the backbone of the organization must feel a sense of security of employment and feel valued. She attributed good leadership to the ability to develop a level of trust and the ability to “dialogue with the people that are trusted to work in the organization. She stated that “radical change” can occur when “the community of parents of students” trusts the superintendent to do what is best for students and trust the site administration to do “what’s in the best interest of the children and the community.” She believes test scores will improve and graduation rates will increase “because everybody wants to roll up their sleeves and participate in bringing about whatever change that needs to happen.” She shared:

that’s why the leader in a case of a school district the principal the vice principals the people that work in the district or in the office of the superintendent and the board members are the truly working to bring about whatever changes that need to be made in the best interest of the students. The students are the clients.

Female/male leadership. Fairuza believed that women and male California K-12 public education administrators performed their daily tasks differently. She commented those women were criticized when they did not follow the male administrator model. The criticism came in the form of being “too emotional or too sensitive.” As a result most women imitated the male administrator model in order to be promoted. She noted that there were some women who do not follow this model, but do “what’s in the best interest

of the students.” She stated:

I do find that some women who have the confidence to do that are able to do that, but sometimes that comes at a price because again they’re the ones that are going to encounter challenges especially from other male administrators...so I think that overall, if women were able to chart their own path, they do tend to have different leadership styles than men; but I think a lot of women don’t do that primarily because they do come under criticism. And if they want to be upwardly mobile, they really have to sort of adopt the so-called male leadership role in order to be more successful and to receive less criticism

Fairuza indicated that “there’s most definitely a difference between men and women and their task.” She shared:

What I have seen is that female leaders tend to do more because they don’t expect the secretary of the staff to do all of it. Males are notorious for getting their assistant or secretary to do above and beyond what they’re expected to do. Things like ordering flowers for their wife or picking up clothes from the cleaners. They can’t even go get their own coffee for crying out loud. They figure, ‘Well I have a secretary so she can do all that’, whereas, women...don’t expect their staff to do all of those mundane things.

Fairuza expanded on her belief that a woman’s style of leadership differed from a man’s leadership. She believed women to be more sensitive and nurturing than men as a result of their upbringing. Women tended to be more hands on than men. Men “delegate tasks and jobs, whereas, women go ahead and do it themselves to get it done right away”.

Fairuza stated:

one of the issues with that is when you have these clear cut male and female roles—which haven't changed that much even in the work place—it continues to promote this idea that certain tasks are for women, even if you are in a leadership position, and males have another set of tasks that are so called masculine or man types of tasks.

Fairuza attributed these female and male tasks in the workplace as a reflection of what is occurring in the home. Through a sociology lens, Fairuza indicated that this would not change until it is addressed at a larger social level. Hence, she stated, “It is very different in terms of the style of leadership that women have than men have in the work environment”.

Fairuza commented that a female leader must be cautious on how she responded to situations or crisis. If she raised her voice, showed emotion, presented justification for her decision, or explained her concern, she might be accused of being defensive and reactive. She would not be taken seriously. She would be criticized “or be told, ‘You know you’re too emotional you need to be less emotional’ or ‘Well you need to go back and rethink how you handled that situation because you’re not sowing good leadership skills’ or ‘You’re being irrational, you’re too sensitive.’” Women leaders had to be careful that they were not direct in their demeanor, otherwise, “they’re usually called a bitch. That’s a term that’s often applied to a woman that is self-assured and that is confident. That knows what she’s doing, and, in many cases, it’s no different than how a male acts.” Contrary to women, men were expected to be direct. Fairuza stated, “Now if a man has those attributes, then it’s a whole different kind of story. Those are viewed as positive attributes.”

Fairuza stated that women were cautious to reveal “things that are near and dear to their hearts” to avoid criticism:

Another thing I hear a lot around some of these environments is ‘Well, she must be on her period’ or ‘It must be PMS that’s causing her to act that way’. And yet you never hear the same kinds of comments about men...men can have a bad day and you know they’ll just say ‘Well he’s just having a bad day’. And if a woman is having a bad day, it’s often attributed to her emotions and her physiological state of her body so there’s a big difference in terms of the kinds of style of leadership in what women are able to show and how it’s interpreted, not just by men, but other women themselves.

Fairuza shared her thoughts on whether male leaders’ experience the same challenges as female leaders. She perceived that White non-Latino male leaders were forgiven when they made a decision where the outcome was different from what was expected. They were given more latitude with respect to errors as they made decisions. Fairuza provided an example of the type of comment that a White non-Latino male leader’s bad decision might receive: “Those decisions don’t turn out so well are attributed not to their individual traits, but rather to, ‘Well there was something going on that caused [him] to do that.’” For a white male, the excuse of having a “bad day” would be accepted by his supervisor. Leaders of color were treated with more criticism, especially women of color, when the outcome is less satisfactory. Fairuza stated, “People of color tend to be under the microscope a lot more because remember that in our society the group that has the most privilege are white males.”

Fairuza explained the challenges with female leaders with respect to their

responsibilities to their families. She shared that studies show gender roles were fixed despite a 7% traditional family structure in place. She defined the traditional family structure to be, “where the mom is at home taking care of the kids and the dad is the primary bread winner”. The remaining family structures have the women working full time. This can be exhausting for a woman leader who works 40 plus hours a week and then must maintain the home, children, and spouse—if there is a spouse. She shared:

For Latina leaders, it means basically it’s not an 8-hour work day, it’s more like 10 or 16 hours a day...but a lot of it comes at the neglect of your own emotional, psychological, and even physical needs, because a lot of times you need to get things done; but you need to take care of yourself personally. Because by the time you get done with your professional activities and then still have to come home and do the other work that’s required to keep your family going, there isn’t too much left by then. And so I think men still continue to be the beneficiary because, even if he has a working wife at home, when he gets home he doesn’t have to pick up and put in another 5 or 6 hours at home.

Fairuza shared her thoughts on teamwork and whether it was easier for women or men to work in teams. She stated that women “have an advantage” when it comes to working in teams. Their style is to work with others and to insure that things are proceeding forward. As a result:

Workers are appreciated for what they attribute. And so when you have that kind of structure, team members are more likely to bend over backwards without being asked; because they feel validated and they feel appreciated. Whereas with men, they are not as likely to have that team work approach because they’re used to

having things done for them... So the marker of a good leader is someone who can work as a team on an equal basis with everyone they work with. So, in that respect, it is very different for women and men.

Fairuza explained the importance of trust within a team. If there was no trust, there would be misunderstandings and miscommunication. She stated, “Trust is a very important attribute and trait to have especially if you’re in a leadership position...to be honest and people had to know they could trust you and you were going to keep your word.”

Goals and challenges. Fairuza shared her goals in California K-12 public schools education and what prevented her from being successful in meeting her goals. Fairuza explained her goals change from one year to the next as a result of funding and new laws. She indicated her current goal was to work with the school district to ensure that at-risk students received support, to reduce expulsion rates, to increase college entrance rates, and to increase parent participation. Her goal was to ensure that funds from the Local Control Funding Formula [LCFF] were distributed equitably.

Fairuza shared her perception of how women administrators might encounter challenges. She explained that there was a perception that men were better prepared for leadership positions. This perception influenced interview panels. The panel itself might not be balanced with respect to “having minorities on the panel” or “having both men and women.” Since the interview process was subjective, if a fair interview process for women were implemented, there would be an increase in the number of women in leadership positions. Fairuza stated:

the main challenge to get into the position for women is a matter of having to prove yourself over and over. It’s not enough that you have the credentials to be there. It’s

not enough that you beat out the other candidates. And when you're in that position, it's constant having to prove yourself. Not just the first year, but for years to come after that.

Fairuza described how to address challenges. As a board member, she would collaborate with other board members within the legal parameter in order to acquire support on issues that required a vote. She stated the challenge for her was “to come up with some kind of plan prior to a vote.” These votes were on issues that affected children’s education, personnel, and the budget. Fairuza said, “The main thing for me, in terms of whatever challenges were, had to do with what are we going to do to make it better for the kids that go to this district. That was the bottom line.”

Fairuza shared how she viewed her responsibilities to her family as they may have conflicted with her work. She stated:

[It is] an ongoing balancing act...I think the responsibilities are much harder for woman because you're getting pulled in different directions. And, at times, it's kind of hard to say no to your community that needs certain things for the students and then, on the other hand, your family also needs your time and attention. So it was a very difficult thing for most women trying to be good leaders at the same time take good care of our families

Fairuza shared ethnically orientated interactions that she has perceived as barriers in reaching her professional and personal goals. Others had the perception that she, a female Latina, acquired her position as a result of affirmative action. She has heard comments such as, “the reason she’s there is because she was given a break. She’s one of those affirmative action people...That’s how she got there, she got preferential

treatment.”

Latina leaders. Fairuza shared her belief that Latinas were systematically excluded from positions of authority from within California K-12 public school system. She shared there was a perception that Latina women were not as qualified for leadership positions as male and female colleagues. She witnessed the exclusion of aspiring female Latina leaders from leadership positions within the district when she was a member of the Board of Trustees. Fairuza explained the reason for the exclusion was that those with the authority to hire were White non-Latino males who lacked “culture sensitivity”. They attempted to define a female Latina’s potential to become a leader by saying, “you don’t have the potential to do that.” Fairuza stated, “They come from upper middle-class environments and the only Latinos that they interact with are gardeners or housekeepers.” Fairuza expressed that more Latino role models were needed for Latino children to be motivated to aspire to attain positions that have the responsibility to shape the future.

Fairuza described professionally related interactions that she has had that made her feel she was being excluded or treated differently because of her ethnicity. As a board member, the superintendent would withhold information from the Latina board members, but he would provide the information to the White non-Latino board members. The Latina board members would receive the information just prior to voting on the information. Fairuza stated, “that was a form of exclusion and being treated differently because it was only done to the Latina board members.”

Fairuza was asked whether she believed she had been a victim of any ethnically oriented bias that has prevented her from obtaining positions of authority in the

California K-12 public school system. She indicated that her “sociological training” has allowed her to perceive things “at the micro level and connect [them] to the macro level”. As a result of her intuition and her work ethic, she was able to strategize and avoid being a victim of ethnically oriented biases. She shares, “I’ve been in these kinds of leadership positions so that I could connect the dots and figure out what was going on.” Although, as an adult, Fairuza was able to avoid becoming a victim of ethnically oriented biases, she experienced such biases during her childhood:

I grew up in a community where [Whites held all of the important positions].

There were no role models in terms of Mexicans being in decision-making positions. So I did grow up with somewhat of an inferiority [complex]. I think not having those role models and then my parents, of course, didn’t have a high level of education. And so the only job that Mexicans in the community had were jobs where they had to answer to Whites. And I never liked it. I use to question it all the time, but there was nothing that I could do while I was growing up.

As a young person, Fairuza tried to understand and interpret why White non-Latinos in her community were more affluent than the Mexicans living in the same community. She commented,

We used to think that ‘Well those White kids must deserve more than we do because look at all the material things that they have.’ They get to go on vacation. They had a nice car. They have nice clothes and we really didn’t have that much. So, yeah, that was quite noticeable to [my friends and myself]. We figured in order...to have the good things in life that they must be smarter than we are; because we’re working in the fields in the hot 120 degrees, no air conditioning in

the house, wearing raggedy shoes and clothes. And they would, after Christmas, have new bikes and roller skates. And there were five of us, my mom would get a bike and we all would have to share the bike...it was a used bike. It wasn't even a new bike. So, you know, you go around with [an] inferiority [complex] thinking, 'Since they have all those things...they have to be pretty smart for them to get a shiny new bike every Christmas and the rest of us have nothing.

Fairuza provided another childhood example regarding school lunch. She would take burritos for lunch. At that time, burritos were not a popular or familiar food among the White non-Latinos. She shared, "It was embarrassing. We wanted a bologna sandwich and bologna isn't good for you. It's processed meat, but we didn't know that." Fairuza recounted her experience at the drive-in theater:

They had a drive-in theater. Well, all the other kids at the snack bar were the White kids. And my mom would take our burritos and our treats and we didn't want those treats. We wanted to go to the snack bar and buy the junk food. So we would stay in our car and we were too embarrassed to let anyone see what we were eating because we wanted the popcorn and all the other goodies that the other kids were eating. So it was pretty dramatic, you know, when you're a kid. That's a big deal to you.

Networks and wrap-up. Fairuza shared what networks she sought to build and utilize. When she was a board member, she attended the Latino School Board Association. She networked with other Latino board members throughout the State of California. She did not network as much with the "National School Board Associations, where you had mostly White people that attended those and they tended to hang out with

their own little click.” As a professor and researcher, she attended “regional and national conferences and touch base with other sociologist who are doing some of the same research or who have some of the same research that [she does].” As a community member, she continues to work with parents of English Language Learners [ELL] in order to improve the local district’s educational system. She “[enjoyed] working with those mothers who [were] also interested in the same issues that [she was].”

Fairuza shared her major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership administrative work. Her major source of satisfaction was using her leadership skills to influence others to become enthused to make a difference by getting involved in issues at the professional and community levels. She shared:

For me, that’s been the biggest source of satisfaction is being able to use what I know and...[through my] sociological perspective...see the bigger picture and making those kinds of connections and then sharing what I’m observing with my parents [is] even bigger than what I do at the university.

Fairuza mentored students in her classes to become future leaders. She encouraged them to get involved in community issues in order to make a difference. Her dissatisfaction was constantly addressing the lack of institutional inequity or racism.

Chapter Five

Comparative Analysis

Chapter five is a comparative analysis of the data related to advancement and mentoring, challenges and supports, and networks utilized among female Latina leaders in K-12 public education institutions in this exploratory study. The analysis first compares some similarities in the six leaders' views concerning their educational background, work positions, and parental backgrounds. The comparison in this chapter is then based on the following domains: (a) Perceptions of Mentoring, (b) Perceptions of Leadership Role, (c) Perceptions of Female/Male Leadership, (d) Goals and Perceptions of Challenges, (e) Perceptions of Female Latina Leaders, and (f) Networks. A summary of these similarities and differences has been provided in Tables 1 through 3.

Background Experiences

Regarding background, all study participants were Mexican Americans, setting up a special setting for the study. These study participants mirrored the population they served and, moreover, identified with the children their school districts served.

Regarding educational background, all six female Latina leaders earned graduate degrees, with three (Alejandra, Delina, and Elisabete) earning master's degrees and three others (Berta, Caridad, and Fairuza) earning doctorates. Of the three earning doctorates, Caridad and Fairuza earned Ph.Ds., and Berta earned an Ed.D. Half of the leaders (Alejandra, Elisabete, and Fairuza) were over 60 years old. Berta was 40 years old and Caridad was 46 years old. Delina, under 40 years old, was the youngest female Latina leader interviewed.

With regards to current work positions, two leaders (Alejandra and Caridad) were Coordinators, but as Caridad noted, her salary was equivalent to that of a Director. Berta was a Director and Elisabete was an elementary principal. Both Delina and Fairuza were former Board members, with Delina currently an elected official and Fairuza a college professor.

The fathers of the majority of the leaders (Berta, Caridad, Elisabete, and Fairuza) had experience as field laborers. The fathers of two others (Alejandra and Delina) held blue-collar jobs: Alejandra's father as a mechanic and Delina's father as a gardener, room service worker, and hotel worker. Furthermore, Alejandra was the only leader whose father was not an immigrant, whereas the fathers of the others were immigrants. Although the amount of education that Elisabete's father completed was not disclosed, Alejandra's and Caridad's fathers completed some elementary level of education. Furthermore, Fairuza's father completed the junior high level of education, Berta's father completing the 11th grade, and Delina's father successfully passing the GED exam.

The mothers of four of the leaders (Berta, Caridad, Elisabete, and Fairuza) were also laborers, with experience working in field labor. Alejandra's mother worked as a secretary and Delina's mother worked as a Financial Aid Officer. Alejandra's mother was the only mother who was not an immigrant, while the mothers of the others were all immigrants. In addition, the mothers of the four leaders who had experience working in field labor (Berta, Caridad, Elisabete and Fairuza) completed some elementary level of education. Delina's mother passed the GED exam and Alejandra's mother completed the 12th grade and one year of community college.

Table 1

Comparison of Background Information of the Female Latina Leaders

Female Latina Leaders	Age Range	Highest Level of Education	Job Title	Father's Information	Mother's Information	Participant Worked in the Fields?
Alejandra (Protector of Humanity)	Over 60	Master's Degree	Coordinator	Completed 6 th grade; Mechanic; Not an Immigrant	Completed 12 th grade; Secretary; Not an Immigrant	No
Berta (Brilliant, Bright)	40 years old	Doctorate	Director	Completed 11 th grade; Farm Worker; Immigrant	Completed 6 th grade; Farm Worker; Immigrant	Yes; 10 years old; 9 months total
Caridad (Love and Generosity)	46 years old	Doctorate (PhD)	Coordinator (Director's salary)	Completed 4 th grade; Farm Worker, Steelworker, Gardener; Immigrant	Completed 2 nd grade; Farm Worker, Housekeeper, Nanny, Cleaned houses, Seamstress in sweat shops; Immigrant	No
Delina (Graceful and Noble)	36-40 age range	Master's Degree	Elected Office (Former Board Member)	GED; Gardener, Room Service Worker; Hotel Worker; Immigrant	GED; Administrative Assistant, Project Assistant, Financial Aid Officer; Immigrant	No
Elisabete (Promise of God)	61 years old	Master's Degree	Elementary Principal	Father – Forman in agriculture, Step-father Farmworker; Immigrant	Completed 3 rd grade; Farmworker; Immigrant	Yes; 8-17 years old; 9 years total
Fairuza (Woman of Triumph)	Over 60	Doctorate (PhD)	College Professor (Former Board Member)	Completed 8 th grade; Farm Worker; Immigrant	Completed 3 rd grade; Farm Worker; Immigrant	Yes; 10 years old; 7 years 3 months total

The influence and examples that the parents shared with all six participants formed the foundation for leadership roles and the purpose they gravitated to in their

public education careers. Additionally, they all shared a common desire -- to help children. For example, Alejandra volunteered at her children's school while operating her business. Eventually, Alejandra secured a leadership position with a public school district as a communication coordinator. She wrote grants to acquire additional resources for students, with her focus always to help children. Similarly, Berta enjoyed teaching. She desired to support students and help them learn. Initially, she did not consider moving to a leadership position, but she realized that she would be in a position to have a greater impact on student learning as an administrator. Caridad's personal motivation to help children was based on her experience growing up in poverty. She desired to support children, especially those who were at a socioeconomic disadvantage. She reported being bullied her entire life as a result of her ethnicity and poverty; therefore, she entered the leadership role to prevent bullying of this type and to provide opportunities and resources for students.

Delina felt leadership was the means to helping students that didn't have easy access to the education system. She indicated that her personal experience as an English Learner provided her with the sensitivity or understanding of "underrepresented students that traditionally have lower than average rates for a lot of major areas: education, employment, health and so on." Delina's leadership path led her to serve as a school board member for a school district and eventually as an elected official. Elisabete's experience as a migrant working child gave her the sensitivity to understand the challenges that migrant children encounter as they move from one school to the next. She also shared that teaching is a calling, not a job. It is a way to serve students. She, too, entered administration to positively influence more students than those who were just in

her class. Finally, Fairuza's childhood experience with institutional inequality led her to her leadership role as a school board member for a school district and a college professor. Her desire to support students in acquiring an equitable education has influenced her involvement in partnering with schools to create systems that help all students.

In sum, although the female Latina leaders' experiences varied in the era of time (i.e., some were younger than others), they experienced the same in the areas of childhood poverty, their gender, and their ethnicity. They considered all three factors very influential in guiding them into their leadership roles.

Perceptions of Mentoring

The six female Latina leaders indicated that their first mentors were family members. Alejandra, Berta, Elisabete, and Fairuza shared that their mothers were their family mentors. Two female Latina leaders indicated a family member other than their mother was their mentor. Caridad shared that her grandmother was her family mentor. Delina acknowledged her parents, aunts and uncles as her family mentors. The type of family mentoring varied in activities (see Perceptions of Mentoring table), but the themes for all six female Latina leaders were support, advice, guidance, encouragement, ethics, and values.

The four female Latina leaders who included Latino/a leaders as their professional mentors were Berta, Caridad, Elisabete, and Fairuza. The two female Latina leaders who did not specify Latino/a leaders as their professional mentor were Alejandra and Berta. Alejandra's mentors were White non-Latino professionals. Delina shared that her professional mentors were individuals with the same values who had her best interest in mind when advising her. Three female Latina leaders who included teachers in the K-12

public education system as professional mentors were Alejandra, Berta, and Delina. Two female Latina leaders who shared that a college professor was a professional mentor were Caridad and Elisabeth. The type of professional mentoring varied but could be categorized as follows: guidance, support, and advice. For example, the three female Latina leaders who received guidance in applying and attending college were Alejandra, Caridad, and Delina. The five female Latina leaders who received political advice from their professional mentors were Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza. All six female Latina leaders received social emotional support throughout their careers from their professional mentors.

The challenges that the six female Latina leaders experienced varied from the following: feeling isolated as a result of their ethnicity and gender; often their decisions were challenged and questioned by subordinates; must be twice as good, better spoken, better educated, better versed in order to be seen as an equal to male colleagues; experienced institutional racism, gender and age discrimination, and male mentors did not completely understand the female Latina leader; and the Latino community's perspective that Latina females aren't readily seen as leaders.

Finally, the six female Latina leaders commented on how females acquire mentors verses males acquiring mentors based on their experiences. They indicated that they sought their mentors and mentors sought them as a result of the mentors' trust and respect for the caliber of work that they (female Latina leaders) produced. Caridad stated that it was easier for females to seek female mentors as opposed to seeking male mentors. Berta and Caridad shared that cultivating relationships in order to have mentors is important. The four female Latina leaders who shared that it was easier for males to acquire mentors

were Berta, Caridad, Elisabete, and Fairuza. Elisabete shared that male leaders were groomed for promotion. Fairuza shared that opportunities increase for male leaders as a result of the expectation that males acquire leadership positions. Alejandra shared that it would depend on available opportunities and current situations.

In summary, mentoring for the six female Latina leaders was in the form of emotional support, educational and professional guidance, and political advice. Their first mentors were parents and family members. As they grew, they sought and cultivated educational and professional mentors. As a result of them conducting themselves to be twice as good, better spoken, better educated, better versed to prove they were competent for their leadership position initiated professional mentors to seek them. Nevertheless, it was exhausting for them to constantly perform with perfection as they experienced institutional racism and feelings of isolation as a result of their ethnicity, gender, and age.

Table 2
Comparison of Perceptions of Mentoring

Female Latina Leaders	Family Mentor	Type of Mentoring	Professional Mentor	Type of Mentoring	Challenges	Females vs. Males acquire mentors
Alejandra	Mother	Encouraged, supported, and advocated on her behalf	History teacher, counselor, a work colleague, and fiancé	Encourage and support her to attend college	Father's low expectations and disapproved attending college afar	Depends on opportunities or situations
Berta	Mother & Father	Guided; supported; Mother is mentor	Bilingual 3 rd grade teacher; Colleagues; Female leaders; Female Latina leaders; and Retired superintendents	Professional guidance, advice, and support	Few Latina leaders; Experienced institutional racism; Gender and age discrimination	Females seek mentors. Mentors seek females when their caliber of work produced is excellent; Mentors are more available for males
Caridad	Paternal Grand-mother	Provided advice and support	Older peers; Professor; Majority	Assisted, guided, supported	Experienced personal racism;	Female mentors are personal

			mentors were Latino mentors; 'Comadres'	throughout college and career	Feeling isolated as a result of being a minority or Latina	relation-ship; Easier for females to seek female mentors; Easier for males to acquire mentors
Delina	Parents, aunts, uncles	Time management responsibility, commitment to values, perseverance, academic advice and guidance	2 nd and 6 th grade teachers; Individuals with same values who have her best interest in mind when advising her	Assisted, advised, guided in life, politics, and community service	Male mentors lack Understand experience of the female Latina leader's journey; Female leaders of color must be twice as good, better spoken, better educated, better versed in order to be seen as an equal with male colleagues; Stereotypes; Few female leaders; Female Latinas are a double minority, Token Latina; Raising children; Meeting family need first	Female Latinas pursue mentors with similar values, experience, and lifestyle
Elisabete	Mother	Service, Strength, wisdom; Devoted family; Instill unity in the family; Work in teams; Conflict resolution	Professor, Male Latino Superintendent; Male White vice principal; Female White administrator	Expertise, opinion, ideas, advice, knowledge, guidance, support	Female Latina leader for White teachers; Often questioned or challenged; Not taken seriously; Be assertive or straight-forward	Seek mentors or mentors seek you; Male leaders are groomed for promotions
Fairuza	Mother, Grand-	Instinct, intuition, or	Mothers of the community;	Shared ideas and	Females are perceived not	Males don't have the same

	mother and aunts	sensitivity	Dolores Huerta; Political organization; Male Latino leaders	provided support; modeled leadership skills	to be as competent as male leaders; Latino community members believe female Latinas should work in positions that will not interfere with family activities; Females who attain high positions tend to be invisible; Female Latina leaders are scarce because few are in leadership positions	obstacles as females; Female leaders must seek their mentors; Society's view of males increases leadership opportunities
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Perceptions of Leadership Role

All six female Latina leaders indicated that awareness of the Latino culture and other cultures was a skill of a leader. Alejandra, Delina, and Fairuza mentioned that listening was an important skill for a leader to acquire in order to be effective. Elisabete and Fairuza shared that a leader required skills to communicate with those they serve. Alejandra and Berta mentioned that understanding was a quality that a leader should possess. Alejandra indicated a leader must be trustworthy, respectful, nonjudgmental, positive, passionate, and understand the budget. Berta shared that a leader should be emotionally intelligent. Caridad indicated that a leader should possess mentoring skills. Delina shared that a leader should be thoughtful. Fairuza indicated a leader should be humble and give praise to those she/he serves.

All six female Latina leaders acquired their work ethics from their parents' examples and grew up in poverty. They all received emotional support from their parents and learned to be sympathetic and frugal. Delina and Elisabete shared that their parents taught them to care and support others. Berta shared that her parents taught her to be responsible, to be an example for others and do the right thing. Caridad indicated that her parents instilled loyalty in her. Fairuza shared that her parents instilled intuition, instinct, and humility within her.

Berta shared that the challenges a leader encountered were to be aware of how others interpret or perceive female Latina leaders. In addition a female Latina leader encounters challenges as a result of being a female Latina, or gender issues. Also, there was a challenge of being accepted as a leader. Delina shared a challenge that female leaders must be cautious of is the stigma of being sensitive. Caridad and Elisabete indicated the challenges of a female Latina leader were ethnic and gender discrimination and being bullied by those who are racist.

In summary, all six female Latina leaders shared their perception of characteristics and skills of an effective leader. They stated that a leader should be thoughtful, trustworthy, respectful, nonjudgmental, positive, passionate, and humble. They indicated the skills a leader should possess are an awareness of the Latino culture and other cultures; listening to constituents; communicate to all they serve, understand the budget; mentor others; praise others; and possess emotional intelligence.

The female Latina leaders shared the challenge of perception – that is, being aware of how others perceive her. In addition, the female Latina leader encounter challenges as a result of her gender and ethnicity. All six female Latina leaders learned

from their parents to do the right thing and work with loyalty, diligence and passion. For all six female Latina leaders, poverty was no stranger. As a result of living in poverty, all six female Latina leaders learned to be sympathetic, intuitive, and frugal.

Table 3

<i>Comparison of Leadership Role</i>			
Female Latina Leader	Leadership Characteristics and Skills	Parental Influence	Challenges
Alejandra	Trustworthy, Respect, Understanding, Aware, Nonjudgmental, Positive, Passionate, Listening skills, Budget skills	Work ethics, social emotional support, sympathetic, experienced poverty, frugal	--
Berta	Aware, Emotional Intelligence, Racially Responsive leader	Work ethics; Be responsible; Be an example; Do the right thing; Sympathetic, Social Emotional support; Experienced poverty, frugal	Cognizant of how others perceive and interpret female Latina's leadership; Gender issues; Acceptance as a leader
Caridad	Aware, Racially Responsive leader, mentoring skills	Frugal, experienced poverty, work ethics, social emotional support, loyalty	Bullying and discrimination
Delina	Aware, thoughtful , listen, understand	Responsible, cared for others, support others, work ethics, social emotional support, frugal	Avoid the stigma of women as being sensitive.
Elisabete	Bicultural, Racially Responsive leader, Awareness, Communication skills	Experienced poverty, caring, support others, work ethics, frugal	Discrimination and bullying
Fairuza	Bicultural, Racially Responsive, Awareness, Communication skills, Listening skills, Trust, Praise, Humble	Instinct, Intuition, humility, work ethics, poverty, social emotional support, frugal	--

Perceptions of Female/Male Leadership

Alejandra shared that there was a difference in the way male and female leaders conduct themselves, process information, and respond to situations. She stated that female leaders were more sensitive to the dynamics of a challenging situation and they had different childhood experiences than male leaders. Alejandra gave the example that female leaders may have had limited resources or experiences. In addition, they have maternal instincts/compassion, were more forgiving, and willing to listen. She stated that female Latina leaders could identify and relate to Latino children that they served as a result of having similar childhood experiences. Regarding working in teams, Alejandra shared it was easier for female leaders to work in groups than it was for male leaders. She stated male leaders first tried to resolve an issue alone. If the male leader was unable to solve the concern, he would seek assistance from another male leader. On the other hand, female leaders listened to one another to problem solve. They naturally gravitated toward problem solving as a group. They were clear and precise in their message. They ensured each member of the team was given an opportunity to provide input and receive feedback. They emphasized the importance of team members being supportive of the team's goals and timelines. As a result, trust was built.

Berta shared the same perception as Alejandra with respect to there being a difference between male and female leadership. Berta indicated that female leaders must do their tasks differently. They have to find a way to complete their work according to their vision and influencing others to agree with their vision. She shared that male leaders could be straightforward, direct, and to the point, whereas, female leaders could not be straightforward. When female leaders conduct themselves as such, they were perceived

as aggressive, not flexible, and not a team player. Berta shared that a female leader's style must be different from a male leader's in order to be promoted to higher positions.

Female leaders should have the skills to assess the situation, listen to different perspectives, and influence individuals in order to make changes in the organization.

Female leaders were able to multi-task and perceive things differently than male leaders.

Berta shared that male and female leaders of color experienced similar challenges of race and ethnicity. Women of color were more willing to accept the vision of a female Latina leader, whereas, some White women had difficulty doing so. Although male leaders of color had some similar challenges as female leaders of color, male leaders of color had a very different overall experience compared to female leaders of color. She stated that male leaders of color were part of the dominant culture that you see in leadership positions in education. Berta explained that women of color must work twice as hard to be considered for a leadership position. The workload for a female leader of color was twice, three times, or four times the workload for male leaders.

Regarding working in teams, Berta and Alejandra shared that it was easier for women to work in teams. She shared that a leader is aware of the strengths of team members and groups them together. She and Alejandra indicated that women were more collaborative, open to work together, and willing to exchange ideas. Berta emphasized that trust was the foundation of a relationship and it was needed to accomplish the work goal of a team; therefore, female leaders must develop trust so that individuals would be open and willing to engage in the team's work. Berta shared that female leaders must be mindful and intentional in their interactions. They must not take things personally, but understand that the actions and behaviors of individuals are the result of challenges they

are experiencing. Berta indicated that trust was built by investing time, listening, sharing the ‘why’ behind a decision, explaining how students will benefit from the work, and being consistent with actions and behaviors. She indicated that male leaders encounter minimal resistance when they decide to implement their plan.

Caridad shared Berta’s perception that female leaders must prove they are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities, whereas, male leaders’ competence was not scrutinized and questioned. She agreed with Berta that female leaders must work harder and their work must be perfect. In fact female leaders must conduct themselves professionally with a more conservative approach in comparison with their male colleagues. In addition, Caridad shared that female leaders have domestic chores in the home, whereas, male leaders may not have as many domestic chores.

Caridad stated that female Latina leaders cannot be loud, opinionated, or bossy as male leaders. It would be seen as weaknesses for female Latina leaders, whereas, it would be perceived as strengths for male leaders. She shared Berta’s perception that male leaders encounter minimal resistance, whereas female leaders must be strategic in their thinking and be prepared for questions of ‘why’ the directive was given. Caridad indicated that it was exhausting for female leaders to always consciously strategize.

Caridad shared that female leaders encountered more challenges than male leaders in a team. She perceived that female leaders’ skills differed from male leaders. Caridad shared Alejandra’s and Berta’s perception that female leaders differed from male leaders with respect to working in teams. Caridad indicated that female leaders have to be cautious on how to articulate input and contribute recommendations without being perceived by members of the team as being opinionated or bossy. Caridad stated that

society stereotypes females to be emotional; therefore, society perceives female leaders to make decisions based on emotions rather than knowledge or logic. On the contrary, society perceives male leaders to make knowledge-based decisions.

Delina shared the same perception as Berta and Caridad with respect to female leaders performing their daily tasks differently than their male colleagues. Delina stated that female leaders are more detail minded and multi task better than male leaders. She indicated that some female leaders learned to model male leadership characteristics and behaviors. She stated historically female leaders have not been compensated equally as their male colleagues. Delina shared Alejandra's, Berta's, and Caridad's perceptions that female leaders listen and carefully articulate their thoughts. Delina shared Berta's perception of working in teams. The team members shared similar experiences that made their teamwork more effective. Delina shared Alejandra's, Berta's, and Caridad's perception that female leaders differ from male leaders when working in teams. Delina stated that female leaders understand the importance of working with individuals, of finding better approaches to tasks, of finding ways to achieve goals, and of finding answers to relevant questions.

Elisabete shared the same perception as Alejandra's, Berta's, Caridad's, and Delina's with respect to female leaders: they perform daily tasks differently from male leaders. She indicated that male leaders were treated differently than female leaders. White leaders are treated differently than leaders of color. Elisabete had the same perception as Alejandra's, Berta's, Caridad's, and Delina's regarding the leadership styles of females versus the leadership styles of males. Elisabete suggested that the upbringing of boys and girls are different. Boys and girls are conditioned and expected to

conduct their behaviors differently. She indicated that females tend to be more nurturing and tend to perceive things in different ways: a male can be direct and straightforward, whereas a female who is direct and straightforward is more likely to be perceived as a “Bitch.” Elisabete considered this to be a double standard.

Elisabete stated that male leaders face two key challenges. First, they must take care not to intimidate others, especially if they are larger than their co-workers. Second, male monolingual leaders are not able to communicate with Spanish speaking parents, whereas, bilingual/bicultural Latino leaders are able to communicate with Spanish speaking parents. She indicated that leaders in general will require a very understanding and sympathetic spouse/partner who provides support with domestic roles and responsibilities. Regarding working in teams, Elisabete shared Alejandra’s, Berta’s, Caridad’s, and Delina’s perception that it is easier for female leaders to work in teams than male leaders. Elisabete explained it is easier for female leaders to collaborate, consider the needs of others, and work in teams. She stated females are taught in their childhood to work in teams.

Fairuza shared Alejandra’s, Berta’s, Caridad’s, Delina’s, and Elisabete’s perspective on female leadership styles. She shared Delina’s perception that most female leaders imitate the male model of leadership in order to be promoted. Fairuza agreed with Berta’s and Caridad’s perception that there is a belief/stereotype that female leaders are too emotional or too sensitive. She agreed with Berta and Caridad that female leaders do more in order to prove they are competent to fulfill their responsibilities. She shared that female Latina leaders work 10 to 16 hours a day at the expense of their own emotional, physiological, and physical needs. Fairuza commented that males are notorious for

delegating responsibilities to their assistants and/or secretaries, and explained that female leaders don't expect their staff to perform similarly menial tasks...

Fairuza shared Elisabete's perception that female and male tasks in the workplace are reflections of the differential gender expectations taught in the home. Fairuza shared Alejandra's, Berta's, Caridad's, and Elisabete's perception that female leaders must conduct themselves differently than male leaders. Fairuza explained that a female leader must be cautious with how she responds to situations or crisis. Fairuza shared that female leaders must not raise their voice or show emotion, and that female leaders find themselves justifying their decisions or explaining their concerns. At the same time, a female leader may be accused of being defensive and reactive. Fairuza explained that a female leader must be careful that she is not direct in her demeanor to avoid being called a "bitch." Fairuza shared that female leaders are cautious to reveal things that are near and dear to their hearts to avoid criticism. She explained that if a female leader is having a bad day, others may reason that it is a result of the physiological state of her body.

Fairuza shared the perceptions of Berta and Elisabete regarding the critical treatment of leaders of color, especially when those leaders of color are female. She explained that leaders of color tend to be scrutinized more than White male leaders. When White male leaders make mistakes, they are forgiven or the consequence is much lighter than the consequence of a leader of color. Fairuza shared the perception of Caridad that male leaders have spousal/partner support in the home, whereas, female leaders don't.

Regarding working in teams, Fairuza shared the perceptions of Alejandra, Berta, Caridad, Delina, and Elisabete that female leaders have an advantage when working in

teams as opposed to male leaders. Fairuza stated that female leaders work with others and insure that progress is made. She explained that male leaders are more likely not to have a team work approach because they are accustomed to having things done for them. Fairuza shared that it is important to have trust within a team. If there isn't trust, Fairuza explained, there will be misunderstanding and miscommunication. She shared that a good leader is someone who can work as a team on an equal basis with everyone s/he works with.

Goals and Perceived Challenges

Alejandra, Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza shared that their goal is to serve students. Alejandra emphasized that she dedicates her time and talents to support students. Berta shared she would like to serve students as she attains a superintendent position. Caridad shared she would like to serve students by changing generational poverty for first generation immigrant students. Elisabete shared she would like to support students by improving their academic experience in order to help them reach grade level academics. She would like to provide teachers and students the type of leadership she did not always have. Fairuza shared she would like to support students through policy.

Alejandra, Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza indicated it is challenging to balance work and family responsibilities. Berta shared that the strong work ethic she acquired from her parents made it difficult for her to find time to visit her mother and siblings. Caridad explained that she has a strong sense of ethics as a result of being raised in poverty. She felt that she must work twice as hard to prove that she is smarter and that she can be trusted to do the job. She shared that female Latina leaders

can't afford to work only 8 hours per day. As a result, Caridad's work conflicts with responsibilities to her family. Delina shared she feels a sense of guilt at times for working long hours. She feels family is most important to her. Delina stated that her family is extremely supportive; they sacrifice the most because she must travel and invest long hours to her leadership position. Elisabete shared she is fortunate to have an understanding family and a very supportive spouse. Fairuza shared it is more difficult for female leaders to balance work and family responsibilities. A female leader is dedicated to be a good leader and simultaneously takes care of her family needs.

Alejandra shared a challenge she experienced was her supervisor did not trust her work. As a result, the new constraints of accountability affect her creativity and increases stress to complete projects according to a supervisor's perception of a time frame. Alejandra shared she has experienced judgment from others that was based on her ethnicity.

Berta shared she experienced challenges with some Latino parents who undermine the work that supports students. Despite the Latino parents' undermining, untruths, backbiting, negative comments, and false pretense of support, Berta avoided being reactive to any situation. She did not want to be viewed as too emotional and unable to fulfill her responsibilities. She conducts herself in a calm, thoughtful way, and takes care to listen and convey her message with clarity. She shared this is her approach of being assertive, direct, and firm.

Caridad shared that the adults in K-12 system whom do not understand the barriers of poverty that the first generation immigrant student experience are a central challenge for leaders. She stated that adults do not perceive immigrant students to have

the cognitive ability to be successful in college. She added that female Latina leaders may encounter difficulty from some White males in the K-12 public education system. Her experience has been the lack of respect from some White males stemming from their belief that Caridad lacks their depth of knowledge. The White males do not trust her to share their true feeling with respect to work-related projects.

For Delina, the challenge is that there are few female leaders. She stated that this not reflective of the reality of California, and explained that there could be challenges in the daily experiences women leaders generally and Latina leaders particularly. She indicated that her personal challenge is with individuals who lack understanding that she is a decision-maker, rather than a member of a group who takes notes. From her perspective, the challenge for female leaders is proving that they are capable of doing the work. She explained that female leaders must justify their decisions/actions, whereas some male leaders do not. Delina shared that female leaders of color are double or triple minorities at times and in the spaces that they travel. She indicated that she must first establish credibility in order to avoid the perception that she is a token to her elected office position.

Elisabete's main challenge came from ethnically-oriented interactions that have been barriers in reaching her professional and personal goals. For example, she is bilingual/bicultural and it is easy for her to communicate with Latino families. Consequently, she was accused of being prejudiced against Whites and Blacks. Staff and Board members accused Elisabete of racism, and requested that the superintendent reprimand her.

Fairuza shared a challenge for female leaders is that they must constantly prove that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in leadership positions. She explained that there is a perception that males are better prepared for leadership positions and this perception influences interview panels.

In summary, despite the many challenges that the six female Latina leaders experienced, their dedication and passion to serve students trump the daily and significant obstacles. Their focus on the needs of children serves as a guide through the paths of institutional resistance, including the balancing of family and career, investing more time to prove they are competent to fulfill their work responsibilities, overcoming institutional racism and stereotypes of female Latina leaders, and building trust and respect among those they serve.

Perception of Female Latina Leaders

Berta and Delina shared the belief that female Latinas are systematically excluded from leadership positions. Berta faults the K-12 public school system for excluding female Latinas. Delina shared that public education may have systems that prevent female Latina students to prepare to become leaders. She explained that female Latinas in education should be encouraged to become leaders and that they should be praised for their leadership skills.

Caridad, Elisabete, and Fairuza shared that it is difficult for female Latinas to acquire leadership positions in districts. Caridad explained that males are promoted sooner than females, especially females of color. She has observed the promotion of inexperienced males to leadership positions. There were females who were qualified for those positions, but the position was given to inexperienced males anyway. Elisabete

shared her experience in interview panels. She believed that the panel members judged her and did not hear what she had to share; they went through the process as a courtesy to her. Fairuza shared the perception that female Latinas are not as qualified for leadership positions as males and non-Latina females. She explained the reason for the exclusion is those who have authority to hire are White males who lack cultural sensitivity.

Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza shared they were treated differently as a result of their Latina ethnicity, Berta for her entire life. People had assumed she was Asian and as a result, she was given higher expectations to do well in school, do more work, and earn an 'A'. Caridad felt that male members' comments in a team were listened to, whereas, female members' comments were not given the same value and attention. Delina believed that female Latina leaders were treated differently, particularly if they were part of a body of leadership that was different. She shared that her age, gender, race, and ethnicity have all come together and influenced others to treat her differently. Elisabete was excluded or treated differently as a result of her being a female Latina. She has felt that she was not the right ethnicity and gender. Fairuza shared she and her female Latina Board members were treated differently. She explained the superintendent excluded the female Latina board members from information prior to voting on agenda items.

In summary, the K-12 public school system systematically excluded female Latinas for leadership positions. Female Latinas were not encouraged to become leaders and they were not praised for their leadership skills. Instead, males with less experience were promoted sooner than experienced females of color to leadership positions. The perception that female Latinas were not qualified for leadership positions manifested

during the hiring process. When a female Latina was hired as a leader, she was treated different as a result of her age, gender, and ethnicity. In a team, a female Latina's voice was not heard as their male colleague's voice.

Networks

Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabet, and Fairuza all built their network of professionals. Berta connected with educational organizations that include California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE), and the University of Southern California (USC) Trojan network. Caridad and Delina networked to acquire resources that would assist students and families. Caridad's social capital networks assisted her with her work. Delina sought various networks that assisted her in supporting others. Her networks consisted of professionals, collegial networks, and networks of people who shared her values and ideas. Elisabete built networks with her colleagues and participated in electronic venues. She read blogs, Education Week, and Teach Thought. Fairuza networked with Latino colleagues within the state of California.

The six female Latina leaders expressed their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their positions. Alejandra was satisfied when she addressed new challenges and ensured that her employer will benefit from her skill set. She did not express any dissatisfaction. Berta's major satisfaction was working with colleagues who were committed to the same vision and goals around student learning and family engagement. She stated her major dissatisfaction was the entrenched institutional racism with which she dealt. Individuals were willing to compromise in order to keep the status quo. Such individuals looked the other way and did not do the right thing when they felt they would not benefit politically.

Also, Berta explained that not all individuals were held accountable nor were they held to the same expectation. Berta preferred to serve students of her ethnic background and who were underrepresented. For employment, she sought out districts that served Latino students, English Learners (EL), and students of color. She sought out districts that were progressive, wanted to make a difference, and were on the cutting edge of student learning.

Caridad found satisfaction in observing the positive impact of her work in changing the lives of children growing up in poverty. She explained that there would be a different outcome if Latino students did not have Latino leaders or teachers working with them. She stated White teachers would not understand the poverty that Latino students were being raised in. Also, the White teachers' academic expectations for Latino students were very low because they did not believe that Latino students were capable of learning advanced curriculum.

Delina shared her satisfaction with the limited and sometimes isolated moments of seeing that education is moving in the right direction despite obstacles or history. Her dissatisfaction was with English Learners (EL) who had been in a program more than five years. Elisabete shared her greatest satisfaction was when a child approached her and expressed her/his excitement that Elisabete spoke Spanish as they do. Elisabete shared another satisfaction was the knowledge that she did the right thing by helping a child, a family, or a situation. Her reward was the positive impact of being a role model to the children and families she served. Elisabete stated her dissatisfaction with the educational politics. Teachers who were not happy with her vision would find ways to oppose the vision by attacking a leader's skills in order to establish that the leader was incompetent.

Fairuza's biggest source of satisfaction was using her leadership skills to influence others to become enthused to make a difference by getting involved in issues at the professional and community levels. She added another source of satisfaction was being able to use her sociological perspective to view the bigger picture and make connections. She would share these connections with parents in order for parents to understand how decisions of educators were affecting their children and society. She regarded this to be more important than what she did at the university. Fairuza's dissatisfaction was with having to constantly address the institutional inequality or racism.

In summary, the six female Latina leaders understood the importance of building a source of professional and social networks in order to be successful in their leadership position. Their satisfaction was to be a member of an educational institution that served children, especially children of color who were at a social economic disadvantage. Their dissatisfactions focused on educational politics, the lack of accountability within the K-12 public educational system, the lack of administrators and teachers who mirror Latino students, and the institutional inequality/racism that prevent school districts to be progressive in addressing the academic progress of students of color.

Chapter Six

Summary, Discussion, and Implications

Chapter one of this qualitative study provided an overview of the problem, study purpose, significance, and limitations of this study. Chapter two provided literature revealing three areas of investigation related to 1) perspectives on leadership and women in administration, 2) experiences of Latina leaders in educational administration, and 3) administrators' work in teams. Chapter three described the design and methodology of this qualitative study, including sources of data, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter four presented the data that were developed by examining the recurrent themes interpreted from the coding of transcripts from six interviews with six female Latina educational leaders, and subsequently presented in six cases. Each case represented the study participant's interview in this study, providing the basis of further analyses found in subsequent chapters. The six participants interviewed for this study, Alejandra, Berta, Caridad, Delina, Elisabete, and Fairuza, were all currently working as educational administrators, and had professional experience in schools from before their time as educational leaders. The participants were given pseudonyms with meanings (for example, Fairuza means "woman of triumph") that fit with the main themes in their interviews. Each case in the chapter described the leader's background, experiences with mentoring, leadership roles, views of female/male leadership, goals and challenges, views on Latina leaders, and networks.

Chapter five presented a comparative analysis of the data related to the advancement and mentoring, challenges and supports, and networks utilized among the

female Latina leaders in this study. The comparison of data was based on the categories generated in Chapter four.

The remaining chapter discusses three areas gleaned from the study findings (Chapter four) and analysis (Chapter five) as well as identifies study implications.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the perspectives of Latina leaders in K-12 public education about a) how they acquired and sustained their leadership and advanced as administrators, including the role of mentoring; b) the challenges and barriers these leaders experienced as they led stakeholders in K-12 public education institutions, and c) what supports were needed to help overcome challenges; and the networks Latina leaders seek to build and utilize.

Acquiring and Sustaining Leadership. The first point of discussion concerns the backgrounds and experiences of the Latina leaders as related to their preparation to become leaders. Mendez-Morse's (2004) study of 6 Latina educational leaders previously found that for the leaders in her study, their primary role models and their first mentors were members of their families. Mendez-Morse reported that Latina women described their parents as a couple in strongly influencing their own characteristics, which they did by modeling a strong work ethic. Furthermore, for the majority of these women, "their mothers provided examples of how to interact with others and how to deport themselves" (p. 578), actively supported their daughters' academic success, and modeled female competence. The leaders' fathers also were supportive including taking concrete actions such as by being actively involved in facilitating participation in school activities.

Consistent with findings in the Mendez-Morse (2004) study, the influences and examples that the present leaders shared about their parents formed the foundation for leadership roles and the purpose they gravitated to in their public education careers. As Delina in this study shared, her parents were her mentors. She stated, "I learned a lot from my parents. Even though they didn't go to college, I learned a lot about some fundamental skills that I still feel have helped me be successful." Alejandra described her father as mentor, teaching her to do her very best in whatever she did, saying, "Whatever you do, ... you do the best job you can...I've always heard him in my head for all of my life pretty much giving me some direction." Even though her father was not supportive of her attending a university located far from home, she perceived him to be a strong early influence. Further, consistent with Mendez-Morse's description of support provided by mothers, in this study, most leaders identified their mothers as mentors. Berta identified her most important mentors as her mother and father as "the ones who guided me and supported me" but said that her mother had especially been her personal and professional mentor for life. And, Alejandra noted that her mother "supported us in what we did" as, for example, one of the only room mothers in her school's PTA.

The views of the Latina leaders in this study further suggested another important influence from their backgrounds; the roles several of these leaders took on as children. Their family roles shaped their later careers by underscoring that leadership started in the home. As Berta said, her leadership role was cemented in her from a young age; as oldest child, the expectation in her family was that she would be responsible and lead. As a second grader, she took care of her younger sibling--feeding her breakfast, dressing her for school, and walking her to and from school.

Several Latina leaders in this study also indicated the belief within their families that education was influential in their own choice of an educational leadership path. Delina said that she chose to pursue leadership "to benefit students . . . because it probably touches on a personal background. ...Education was a big and major game changer for me and for my family."

The leaders in this study also identified the effects of discrimination against parents as influential in contributing to their own recognition and awareness of institutional disadvantage for the children and parents they would serve as leaders. As Caridad said, she witnessed the racism against her parents partially because her parents did not speak English and they relied on her and her siblings to translate for them. She stated: "Of course, you as a child come to know what's being told to [parents] because you're translating it."

Mendez-Morse (2004) found in her study of Latina leaders that teachers and counselors were also important mentors. The present study's findings are consistent with this finding as several identified teachers and to a lesser degree, counselors, as key mentors (Table 2, Chapter five).

Challenges and Barriers. A second point of discussion relates to the challenges and barriers Latina leaders identified as experiencing as they led stakeholders in the K-12 public education institutions, as well as supports that were needed to help overcome challenges.

Our findings about challenges and barriers are consistent with previous literature describing a glass ceiling or the slow advancement of women leaders to top positions (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Bolman and Deal (2013), in

their discussion of the glass ceiling, indicated that evidence points to several contributing factors:

- *Stereotypes associate leadership with maleness.* Schein (1975, 1990) found that both men and women tend to link leadership characteristics to men more than women.
- *Women walk a tightrope of conflicting expectations.* Simply put, high-level jobs are "powerful, but women in the minds of many people, should not be. According to this set of beliefs, a powerful woman is distasteful, unfeminine, and even ludicrous." . . . Brescoll and Uhlmann (2008) found that expressing anger was viewed as a positive for male executives, but a negative for women. . . .
- *The challenge for women is to be powerful and 'feminine' at the same time,* which is "an incredibly difficult role negotiation" (Brunner, cited in Keller, 1999). . . .
- *Women encounter discrimination.* In ancient fairy tales as well as modern films, powerful women often turn out to be witches (or worse). . . . Valian (1999) argues that prevailing gender schemata tacitly shape our ways of thinking and associate competence with maleness. Even though these differences are subtle and unconscious, they accumulate over the course of individual careers to give men a competitive advantage. (p. 353)

The perceptions of the women Latina leaders in this study were consistent with these observations. Several leaders mentioned their view that they had to be, in Berta's words, especially "cognizant about how others are going to perceive what I say or don't

say and how that's going to be interpreted in relationship to my leadership practice."

Further, as they said, emulating successful male role models did not mean that women would be successful too. As Berta pointed out, if a male administrator was direct and to the point, the perception was positive but that the female administrator doing likewise was seen as aggressive, inflexible, and not willing to work with others. As Berta said, female leaders must find a different way than their male colleagues to do their daily tasks such as "to bring people along in order to engage" with others in having, for example, administrative vision realized. This is consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2013) point that "a strong woman can make both men and women uncomfortable by challenging the conventional understanding--unless, that is, she finds a way to exercise power that is recognizably different from the norm" (Keller, as cited in Bolman & Deal).

Being judged and valued based on physical appearance also related to previous literature on the experiences of women leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Berta stated that a parent who was a female Latina lawyer would ignore Berta's area of expertise but comment that "she liked my [fashion] style but at the time would not allow me to explain or to articulate what we were doing."

Sanchez-Hucles & Davis (2010) pointed out previously that the intersection of gender *and* ethnicity is a challenge to the leader of color's experiences in the workplace and ultimately their advancement. As they noted, the situation facing women of color is more complex than that faced by White women.

A woman who feels that she is experiencing discrimination must decide if this prejudice is due to race, ethnicity, gender, or some other dimension of her identity. . . Women may be unsure of which aspects of their identities are

responsible for the reactions of others and, as a result, may have difficulty determining an appropriate response (p. 173).

An example of this complexity was Berta's reference to a male Latino parent who ignored Berta's request to adhere to school site visitation policy; but that the male Latino parent was receptive to the male Latino Assistant Superintendent citing the same policy. In another instance that seemed reflective of the bind of not just being a woman but a Latina woman and the intersection of race and gender (Sanchez- Hucles & Davis, 2010), Berta reported that she had experienced "women of color [being] willing to move with [her], move forward. It was the White women that had a huge difficulty." The White women she worked with "were not open to or willing to take direction" from her. She believed then that male (Latino) leaders made for a different experience compared to being female (Latina) in a leadership role "because at least, they are still part of the dominant culture that you see in education that that you see in these leadership roles."

At times in this study, barriers could become strengths, as some of the leaders noted. Facing rejection while searching for a mentor could ultimately provide the leader with resilience and persistence. Caridad said that in her search for mentors it was "easier for someone who is White to acquire a mentor than someone who is Latina" consistent with Sanchez- Hucles & Davis (2010) observation that women of color often have limited access to informal networks. Indeed, Mendez-Morse (2004) found that Latina leaders in her study "constructed a mentor" from the resources they had available. But Berta said that when she faced a rejection from a potential mentor she had to "cultivate those relationships that [she] established and seek out other mentorships, other individuals who would be willing to support [her]." She provided an additional example

of a strength stemming from barriers; women might be able to draw on their ability to multitask and perceive things differently from their male colleagues, which could be a strength.

Despite the benefits that could come from challenges, it appears important to keep in mind Sanchez-Hucles & Davis (2010) cautionary note that respectful and inspiring solutions are needed "to the problems faced by women with complex and diverse identities who aspire to leadership" (p. 179). They stated

Despite convincing evidence of the effectiveness of female leaders, (a) people often prefer male bosses, (b) it is still harder for women to be promoted into leadership roles than it is for men, (c) it is more difficult for women to be seen as effective leaders than it is for men, and (d) leadership hurdles are higher for women of color than for White women and for men. (p. 177).

Collaborative Teams/Networks. As discussed in Chapter two, less hierarchical and distributed conceptions of leadership are on the rise, and leaders are increasingly concerned with leading collaborative work groups in educational organizations and exercising multi- rather than uni-directions of influence. Literature on women's styles of leadership is seemingly supportive of this perspective, indicating that women generally have a more democratic, participative and collaborative style of leadership. Cheung and Halpern's (2010) review of the leader success and gender dynamics literature indicated that top women leaders believed "their style of leadership as women was better suited for the contemporary workplace. Successful women leaders did not reject femininity but supported being "serious about their work, maintaining the highest personal standards,

promoting communication, and being considerate and respectful of their staffs" (pp. 187-88).

A seriousness of work orientation and preference for two-way, respectful communication was demonstrated by Alejandro's comments about her work with Hispanic families.

We deal with families...there are a lot of Hispanic families who don't have the same level of education. So you got to be very careful that you're not talking down to someone, but being...respectful of the voices that everyone adds, to whatever the situation is, or the problem that needs to be solved. So I think in terms of what's important to be a good leader is to really be a respectful good listener.

Alejandro also contrasted male leaders' work in teams with that of females, reinforcing observations about the democratic, participative and collaborative style of leadership on the part of women (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). As we noted in Chapter four, Alejandro stated that male leaders first try to resolve an issue alone. If the male leader was unable to solve the concern, he would seek assistance from another male leader. On the other hand, female leaders listen to one another to problem solve. They naturally gravitate toward problem solving as a group. They are clear and precise in their message. They ensure each member of the team is given an opportunity to provide input and receive feedback. They emphasize the importance that team members are supportive of the team's goals and timelines. As a result, trust is built.

A final point stemming from Ortiz's (2001) analysis of social capital appears relevant. Ortiz indicated that with a growing Latino student population in the U.S., school district top leadership had much to benefit from leaders who represented the community's

population. She used a social capital perspective to examine and interpret the careers of three California Latina superintendents. Studies examining social capital in community studies had shown that "trust, cooperation and collective action, developed through structures of personal relationships and strong networks, sustained neighborhoods and communities" (p. 60). Similarly, as noted in the comparative analysis in Chapter five, most Latina leaders in the present study networked and built relationships to acquire resources that would be of assistance to students and families. As Ortiz emphasized, in administrative careers, "mentorship is a type of structure of relations. Contacts, working and motivating people are also types of structures of relations" (p. 80). In agreement with her perspective, the present study findings would caution against an overemphasis on administrative training focused on technical preparation of school administrators as opposed to a focus on "sources of norms, trust obligations, responsibilities, and other values associated with social capital" (p. 80).

Implications for Research

The study limitations, indicated in Chapter one, have some implications for further research. First, not all of the Latina public school leaders in the current study were currently practicing as site-administrative leaders. Given literature indicating that a primary concern with education leader retention is at the high school level (Pounder and Merrill, 2001), a future study might examine the views of Latina women leaders who are currently in secondary school principal or assistant principal positions. That is, such a study might interview such leaders as to their career paths, prospects for advancement, and the barriers and facilitators they experience.

Second, the sample was quite small, and included primarily leaders who were in urban or semi-urban areas. Because of difficulty in attracting site administrators to rural locations (Enomoto, 2011), a future study might focus on the attraction, retention, career advancement, and perceived barriers/facilitators of Latina leaders in these geographic locales.

Third, a small number of Latina public school leaders exist in California. Yet efforts could still be made to incorporate larger samples of Latina leaders in future studies, perhaps using survey methodology of Latina leaders within the state. For example, a survey could be designed as in Eckman's (2004) study that includes not only role conflict and role overload but also facilitators and barriers such as mentoring received and team dysfunctions in the workplace. As the present study suggests, administrative work in *teams* including team dysfunctions appear critical to the work environment of leaders; items about common dysfunctions and consequences of these dysfunctions (e.g., satisfaction, plans to advance in administrative roles) could be included.

Fourth, not many leaders in this study reported participating in formal mentoring programs as described by Magdaleno (2011) (the CALSA mentoring program). A future study could be situated in such a program, with research exploring, for example, the experiences of "pairs" of mentors, specifically how and whether such mentoring mitigates some of the challenges reported by Latina leaders.

Fifth, a study of parental support, particularly the role of fathers, of Latina college students might also be interesting given the challenges with parental support described by

some. Such a study might provide greater detail about the challenges and facilitators stemming from parents of Latina college students.

Finally, as this work shows the relationship between gender perceptions and minority ethnicity complicates any enquiry of women's leadership potential. This descriptive study shows how ethnicity becomes for many the most salient issue in professional advancement, and in the practice of leadership in educational administration. And the narratives of personal experience provide many details that give clues for future research attempting to unravel the strands of gender and ethnicity.

For example, a quantitative study of a larger sample of Latina/o leaders could explore the effects of ethnicity on success in obtaining professional advancement for both men and women. And a study of women occupying positions having the potential for further advancement could directly address the women's perceptions of the likelihood further leadership opportunities in relation to their own ethnic awareness. Both studies using larger samples could attempt to unravel the two variables ethnic awareness and/or gender.

On the other hand a qualitative study similar to the one used here could provide valuable insights into the reasoning used by both men and women by adding a study of male Latino leaders to the existing exploration of women's views of the difficulties and successes in leadership positions.

Both approaches could show how the complicated practice of achieving professional equity remains important for the administration of educational institutions in the current changing demographics of public education.

Implications for Practice

1. Create family friendly workplaces. In this study, Alejandro mentioned societal expectations that women "take care of everything and everybody. And I'm not sure that when the male leader goes home that they have that same burden." Indeed all 6 leaders interviewed for this study indicated it was challenging to balance work and family responsibilities. Berta shared her strong work ethics that she acquired from her parents made it difficult for her to find time to visit her mother and siblings. Alejandro mentioned that in trying to achieve balance between demanding work and family needs, some superintendents provided "latitude" and "flexibility" and she was "lucky [that she did get that] throughout the years." According to Cheung and Halpern (2010) creating "family-friendly workplace policies for subordinates" would be part of key approach to leadership development that incorporates work and family roles to lend "organizational and family support" (p. 191) to women leaders.
2. Encourage top-level management support for women and Latinas, both prospective leaders, and those already in leadership positions. As Berta noted, a challenge while elementary principal was a shift in leadership whereby a new superintendent (a White male) believed that she "just didn't know what [she] was doing". As she summarized, some of the leaders she had worked with assumed that "the individual who is different from them and [doesn't] mirror them just might not know how to be an effective leader."
3. Prospective leaders should be persistent in establishing a mentoring relationship. In this study, Berta said that facing rejection from a potential mentor made her become resilient and persistent in her search for mentors. As Mendez-Morse (2004) indicated, "a consistent recommendation for those aspiring to leadership positions is the establishment

of a mentoring relationship" (p. 562). Like Mendez-Morse, this study's results suggest that facilitating these efforts might involve:

a. individuals teaching in educational leadership programs forming partnerships with district administrators or school board members to have conversations about any persons of color and women of color who are exhibiting leadership skills; and

b. preparation programs ensuring that the contributions of minorities, females or males, to educational leadership theories or models are included in the curriculum.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Latina Educational Leaders Interview Guide

Researcher: I appreciate you taking time from your very busy schedule to allow me to interview you. Your success in leading public schools is an achievement and your example as a female leader is a role model that others can follow. I would like to ask you questions that would give me information that explains what preparation you received to become the leader that you are today and how did you receive support from others or mentors. I plan to record our interview for accuracy of information. The information you share with me will be used for a dissertation for the University of California Santa Barbara doctorate program that I am currently enrolled in. I will use a pseudo-name for my dissertation, and I will delete your recorded interview once my dissertation is officially accepted. Do I have your permission to record you?

Mentoring

1. Could you briefly describe your professional background? (probe: current title and position)
- 1a. "What attracted you to leadership/administrative work?"*
- 1b. "How does a leader acquire mentors throughout his/her career?"*
- 1c. "How do you see a woman leader acquiring a mentor as opposed to a male leader?"*
- 1d. "Tell me how you acquired assistance and from whom?"*

Leadership role

- 2a. "Thinking about your leadership roles, how has sensitivity to others affected your leadership role?"
- 2b. "How has your childhood affected your leadership role?"

Female/male leadership

- 3a. "If comparing women and male California K-12 public education administrators, do you think they would perform their daily tasks differently?"
- 3b. Do you think a woman's style of leadership differs from a man's?
- 3c. "How do you think male leaders experience the same challenges as female leaders?"

3d. “With the new emphasis on teamwork, do you think it is easier for women or men to work in teams?”*

3e. “Is it more likely that a woman differs from a man in terms of working in teams?”*

Goals and challenges

4. “What are your goals in California K-12 public schools education and what prevents you from being successful in meeting your goals?”

4a. “How do you think women administrators may encounter challenges?”*

4b. “Please describe how you address challenges?”*

4c. “How do you view responsibilities to your family conflicting with your work?”*

4d. “Have you had any ethnically-oriented interactions that you have perceived as barriers in reaching your professional and personal goals?”

Latina leaders

5a. “Specifically considering Latinas, do you believe Latinas are systematically excluded from positions of authority from within California K-12 public school systems? If so, why? Why not?”

5b. “Describe any professionally-related interaction that you have had that made you feel that you were being excluded or treated differently because of your ethnicity.”

5c. “Do you believe you have been the victim of any ethnically oriented bias that has prevented you from obtaining positions of authority in the California K-12 Public school system?”*

Networks and Wrap-Up

6a. What networks do you seek to build and utilize?

6b. “Overall, what have been your major sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in leadership/administrative work?”*

6c. “Do you have any additional comments or questions for me?”

*Related sub probes to be used based on completeness of participants’ responses in the interview process.